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Hospital blunder in England kills RP nurse

Palace junks graft case vs Tesda chief

By David Israel Sicay
Inquirer Magazine

Kempi wants JDV out before merging with Lakas

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Cynthia D. Balana

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, February 7, 2008 | 44 | 18 sections | Vol. 23 / No. 61 | P18

Affidavit A vs Affidavit B

ONCE UPON A TIME Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. (right) as several months in his capacity as CEO of Philippine Forest Corp. stood in line to President Arroyo. On July 4, 2005, during the 47th Asian agriculture dial Nacional Agroforestry program in Tubod, the provincial capital, Ms Arroyo holds a memorandum of understanding for the community-based approach to sustainable forest management. At center is Rep. Rodolfo Dimapilis. [illegible]

SITTING PRETTY Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. returns to court as the CHR chairperson in Mandaluyong City on Wednesday, coming it's the first day of hearings. He was in hiding for the past 40 days to evade a Senate arrest warrant. [illegible]

ZTE witness preparing new story, says Ermita

By Juliet Labog-Javellana,
Christine O. Avendaño
and Kristine L. Alave

"IF YOU ARE READING THIS affidavit, I am probably dead."

This was how the affidavit of Rodolfo Noel "Jun" Lozada Jr. began, according to Vicente "Enteng" Romano, lead convener of the Black and White Movement, a group that has called for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Romano yesterday told the Inquirer that it is "necessary" in case Lozada was harmed "the witness had executed an affidavit detailing his intimate knowledge of the corruption and officials involved in the $329-million contract for the National Broadband Network (NBN) project awarded to China's ZTE Corp.

But Lozada is executing another affidavit that may negate his earlier written statement.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita [illegible]

PNP: We are protecting Lozada at kin's request . . .

By Alexis Pajo, Christine O. Avendaño
and Tarra Quismundo

IT WAS THE POLICE THAT STOPPED Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr., a crucial witness in the ZTE broadband deal whom his siblings and wife had claimed was seized by airport officials upon his arrival at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Tuesday afternoon.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) yesterday said that it fetched the president and CEO of state-owned Philippine Forest Corp. upon the request of two of his siblings.

But, ironically, the PNP said it did not know Lozada's whereabouts. "We [illegible]

. . . but his wife runs to SC for help

By Leila B. Salaverria
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

VIOLETA LOZADA BELIEVED THAT IF her husband would be arrested upon his return to the country on Tuesday the Senate would do the job done if he failed to testify on his allegedly intimate knowledge of the controversial broadband deal with China's ZTE Corp.

But when Rodolfo Lozada failed to pass through the usual gates of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and was not seen by the Senate sergeant-at-arms, her fears mounted.

She later learned that her husband was taken by the police with the help of airport officials.

The uncertainty over her husband's fate, plus her new Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.'s revelations of possible misconduct by pilots against those critical of the broadband deal, is putting her, her husband and their family through mental torture.

Violeta, on her and her husband's behalf, filed a petition for the writ of habeas corpus in the Supreme Court yesterday seeking to order the police to bring him to court and to set him free.

Named respondents were Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon, Assistant General Manager Angel Amrabio of the Manila International Airport Authority, Lt. Col. Pedro [illegible]

Senators up in arms over abduction

By Dona Pazzibugan,
Norman Bordadora and Jeannie Aning

SENATORS EXPRESSED OUTRAGE AT the "abduction" of an alleged key witness in the National Broadband Network (NBN) controversy Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr., and demanded that the Philippine National Police immediately turn him over to the Senate.

Senate President Manuel Villar bluntly denounced the incident in Malacañang's broadcast. Sen. Pandilo [illegible]

Turbulence ahead for airport security chief

By Tarra Quismundo

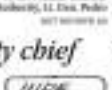
A DAY AFTER LEAVING MANILA airport to maneuver controversy over the "abduction" of Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the Manila security chief finds himself stuck in the workplace.

Retired Brig. Gen. Angel Amrabio seemed to have the politics course. It's his bailiwick.

Amrabio turned 56, yesterday—and members of his staff said their boss took a "birthday leave."

But at least the official still took a call from the bureaucracy, who pressed him on the "Lozada" incident and the outrage it had since triggered among lawmakers and civil society groups.

"There's nothing to be alarmed about because what I did was part of my normal job," said Amrabio, when [illegible]



Cardinal: Church ignored on choice of Vatican envoy

CRISTINA PONCE DIRILE

By Margaux C. Ong

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO Cardinal Rosales yesterday expressed disappointment over Malacañang's designation of the wife of Sen. Jinggoy Estrada as the new ambassador to the Vatican without consulting Philippine Church officials.

Rosales said that although the Roman Catholic Church had no authority to appoint diplomats, its voice was still important in choosing the Philippine ambassador to the Holy See.

"Even if the President of the Philippines has the sole right to ap- [illegible]

Clinton, Obama split Super Tuesday; McCain commands Republican race

WASHINGTON—HILLARY RODHAM Clinton and Barack Obama traded victories in an epic coast to coast Super Tuesday struggle that failed to establish a dominant front runner in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In the fight for the Republican presidential nomination, John McCain seized command of the race by sweeping a series of delegate-rich primaries across the United States.

Super Tuesday was the biggest primary day in US history and offered an opportunity for either Clinton or Obama to establish a decisive lead.

Instead, the two Democratic candidates divided the 22 states and split the number of delegates available within each state, setting the stage for what could be a long fight for the party's nomination.

Clinton, seeking to become the first female president of the United States, won the biggest states—California and her home state of New York. But Obama, hoping to become the first black president, won more contests—at least 13—including major [illegible]

Super Tuesday 2008

No victory proclaimed

Neither Clinton nor Obama proclaimed victory.

"I look forward to continuing our campaign and our debate about how to leave this country better off for the next generation," Clinton told supporters in New York.

Obama was in Chicago where he told a noisy election night rally: "Our time has come. Our movement is real. And change is coming to America."

Moments after the polls closed, Obama seen the vote count is was likely to be hours before it became clear whether he or his rival had captured a [illegible]

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

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SUERTES

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MEGALOTTO 6/45

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Nograles: I'm no miracle man

Reforms take long to brew, says new Speaker

By TJ Burgonio

NOW FEELING THE PRESSURE to produce results, the new Speaker of the House yesterday said he is not a miracle worker.

"Don't expect me to work miracles because I'm now an instant reform. You have to know it a little bit," said Speaker Prospero Nograles, who replaced Benjamin Rep. Jose de Venecia in a open voting that ended at dawn on Thursday.

After his election, Nograles said critics because he's been preparing him with proposals for a wide range of reforms.

"If I walk through the fourth lounge, or walk through the senatorial hall, 10 or 10 congressmen will whisper to me their proposals," he told reporters said Says Rosso in Quezon City.

While his post is the fourth most powerful in the country, Nograles said he cannot implement the reforms on his own but would need the consensus of a majority of lawmakers.

"Don't push me on reform. I'm only one vote. I'm the Speaker but I have only one vote," he said.

Many first-term congressmen, particularly from the Liberal Party, voted to replace De Venecia with Nograles in the hope that the latter would implement their reform proposals.

Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla, who was at the forum, said he has his own list of reforms.

Aside from transparency in the use of House funds, Padilla wants the chamber's 400 committees cut by half. He said this would reduce waste of expenses and improve the legislative in the bill drafting section and the medical clinic, among others.

"We have so much money, but where is the money for such purposes?" he said at the forum.

Nograles proposed the creation of an informal committee to collate the reform proposals and classify them according to whether these were doable or not.

"One by one we will go through them by voting this is Category A, this can be done immediately. Class B, this is difficult, and should be studied. And Class C, this is an impossible dream," he said.

"An ideal may not always be practical," he said.

After this process, the Speaker said he would consult with lawmakers and reach a consensus on how to go about implementing them.

"We will put the reports together, and come up with detailed solutions on how to improve the image of the House. When you improve the image of the House, you have effected changes and reforms in the process," Nograles said.

For now, he wouldn't want to say which of the reforms were doable.

Padilla said he was amenable to Nograles' proposal. "If 50 percent of the doables are implemented, I'll be happy. The good thing about the Speaker is that he's willing to listen," he said.

GMA warns plotters anew

By Norman Bordadora and Christine Avendaño

TRIUMPH HERSELF FRING BATTERED again by corruption allegations, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said the people will not support those wanting to destabilize her government or has been chosen by the "upheaval" that she faced in the past.

What people want is "political stability, a bright future and social justice," the President said in a remarks at the 17th anniversary celebration of the Philippine National Police, in fact first centered on the hour-long demonstration of her that former Deputy Speaker Jose de Venecia delivered last Monday after it became clear that he would be thrown out.

"Those who dream of doing things to disrupt our progress are out of touch with the hopes and dreams of the average Filipino," Mr. Arroyo said.

"We have been through many upheavals over and again, the people have indicated they wanted a stable government and economic progress. That is what they are getting now," she said.

At the House, Committee Rep. Lito Villafuerte yesterday dared De Venecia to make himself available to questions regarding his privilege speech recalling the President.

"If not, the speech should just form part of the records of the House," Villafuerte said.

Villafuerte made the remark after a party-list representative, Teodoro Casiño, inquired on the floor on the status of De Venecia's privilege speech to attack he brought up such issues as the alleged fraud in the 2004 elections, and the alleged corruption and bribery in the Arroyo administration.

The ruling majority leader, Pedrito Rep. Romeo Romulo, the matter of which committee the speech would be referred to was being studied.

Villafuerte said De Venecia has no moral high ground to pitch for moral recovery in government, having brought down his speakership of the House to an all-time low because of his patronage politics, wheeling and dealing, favoritism and questionable use of House funds.

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Meralco: We never got a 16% return

By Abigail L. Mu

THE LONE LED MANILA ELECTRIC Co. (Meralco) yesterday said the utility (MER) had never achieved a 16 percent return on its rate base (ROBR).

"That might have been the target in the 2003 rate adjustment. But in 2007, it was down to just 9.3 percent," Meralco president Jesus Francisco said yesterday.

In a speech Tuesday at the closing of the Energy Summit of the 14th Congressional Center to Study City President Macapagal-Arroyo urged the Energy Regulatory Commission to bring down the return-on-rate base (ROBR) to 12 percent from 16 percent to lower Meralco's distribution charge.

"Maybe the 16-percent (ROBR) has something to do with it. And maybe that will be the solution to bring it down. I'm petitioning the ERC to stick to the 12 percent ROBR. Perhaps that will require Meralco to charge the same rate as other distribution utilities in the Visayas and Mindanao," she said.

Meralco, however, said that contrary to the President's statement, it never got a 16-percent ROBR.

ROBR refers to the rate setting methodology as determined by the ERC whereby utilities are allowed to recover just and reasonable costs and earn a reasonable return to enable such entities to operate viably.

In a statement, Meralco also said that in terms of comparative return on assets, Meralco obtained a rate of only 4 percent in 2006, whereas the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) posted a return of 10 percent in the same year.

With the shift to the performance-based rate-making (PBR) methodology, a new rate setting method that replaced the 80-year old ROBR scheme, the ERC approved a return on capital of 13.07 percent for Transco.

But Meralco and other distribution utilities, however, were only allowed a return on capital of 12.4 percent.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ SULU EXECS poised to file suit vs AFP /A9

■ TEVES, Gatchalian spotted: Another Wack Wack deal? /A9

■ HOSPITAL blunder killed RP nurse, inquest concludes /A11

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of Gymnasium / Program Proper begins @ 5pm
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JDV to Erap: Are you free for dinner?

DEPOSED PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada and recently ousted Speaker Jose de Venecia are looking for dinner tonight—or sometime soon.

Estrada told the Inquirer yesterday that it would be just a social meeting, "if he is free tonight." But he added that there was a "possibility" that the two of them would talk about the ousted speaker tentatively joining the opposition.

According to Estrada, former Sen. Vicente Sotto III called him up yesterday to tell him that De Venecia wanted to meet with him over dinner today.

"I don't know what is his agenda for the meeting, but I think it will just be a social gathering," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview yesterday.

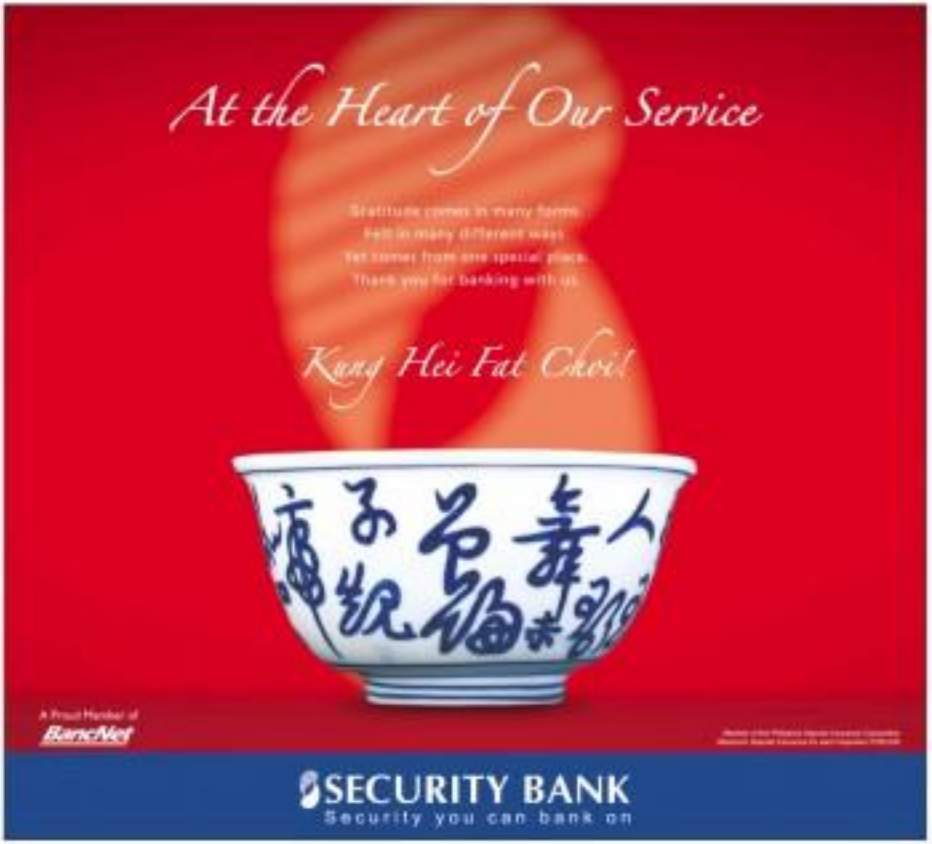
Estrada said he welcomed the idea of De Venecia joining the opposition.

"Politics is addition," he quipped. De Venecia, he said, would be a promising addition to the opposition in its goal to force out the truth in the many controversies that plagued the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

However, Estrada said that the decision to accept De Venecia to the opposition—that is, if the latter decides to join them—would not depend only on him. He said it has to be approved by other opposition leaders.

The former president also said that he was not surprised when De Venecia exposed, in a scathing 54-minute speech, the corruption and the cheating allegedly committed by Mrs Arroyo.

Aurelio M. Oreta



Idol ko

...si Miss Fajardo
Sa kanya, nabuhay ang mga kwento sa English.

...si Miss Jomilla
Walang kasing tiyaga mag-paliwanag ng Math.

...si Bro. Bernie
He wasn't just a teacher, he was a friend.

...si Miss Dawal
Ayokong nag-aabsent sa klase niya.

...si Sir Bundoc
Di ako nag-quit ng med school dahil sa kanya.

...si Sir Yumul
Ibang klase siya. I've never had a teacher who made class so exciting.

...si Dra. Ibe
Kitang-kita mo love niya ang math. Mahahawa ka.

Idol ko...ang teacher ko!

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Luisita tillers ask tribunal to lift TRO

By Jocelyn R. Uy
and Noelene Dejan
Inquirer Central Luzon

A GROUP OF MEMBERSHIPS OF THE troubled Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac yesterday called on the Supreme Court to lift a restraining order on the distribution of the land to form part of a new compromise agreement being offered by the landowners—the family of former president Corazon Aquino.

The Barasoain Agrarian Reform Movement of Hacienda Luisita (BARM), which claims to represent 1,000 farmworkers from three barangays in Concepcion, Tarlac, expressed fears in a press conference in Quezon City yesterday that the delay in the distribution of lands might pave the way for an inadequate deal based on one the expiration of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program in June.

BARM, established in 2005, claimed that a separation drive has been initiated by another farmworkers group urging benefits in order to accept the package being dangled by the Cojuangcos.

The deal reportedly includes the distribution of 1,200 hectares without compensation from the beneficiaries to the government, cash payment to beneficiaries of about P1.98 million and five hectares.

The group complained that the 1,200 hectares (Hacienda-represented only 20 percent of the estate's officially declared 4,915 hectares of agricultural land, it would also make farming unfeasible for those because each of the 6,000 or so beneficiaries would end up with only 2,000 square meters, the group said.

Dr. Lorvin, BARM executive committee member, told reporters that some farmworkers, desperate for cash, have already been duped into affixing their signatures on the agreement.

The group said it found out that these were signatures on the documents they saw that were faked. Cases charged.

Correction

ROY Yap

NEY Yap

IN THE FEB. 3 ISSUE, on Across the Nation story on Page A17—"Bloody power play in Sagay Dalaga"—was accompanied by the wrong photograph. The man in the photo is Ney Yap—not the chair Roy Yap, former mayor of Sagay Dalaga cousin to Malaki Dendenilla. Roy and Ney Yap are brothers.

Readers may send their suggestions or comments of factual errors or setting to the Ray Rafe, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makati St. Makati City, fax No. 897-9-93-96, email address: dgalang@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of balance or objectivity may be sent to Letty Rafer Tiu, ombudsman@inquirer.com.ph, fax No. 897-93-96, Mr. Ricardo Saludo, the ombudsman, 897-8000 ext 342.

The Daily Gospel

Thursday, February 7, 2008
Thursday after Ash Wednesday

In Sunday: Ch 20:11-28
Gospel: Ch 6:14-29

Jesus said, "The four of them must suffer many things. He will be rejected by the elders and chief priests and teachers of the Law, and put to death. Two other things also he will be rejected."

Jesus also said to all the people, "If you want to be a follower of mine, deny yourself and take up your cross each day, and follow me. For if you choose to save your life, you will lose it, and if you lose your life for my sake, you will save it. What does it profit you to gain the whole world while you destroy or damage yourself?"

Commentary

There is urgency in the words of Jesus to today's Gospel. We focus on that the day we die. Jesus what we view on earth will end, and at the end of the life comes the time to render an account for how we have lived. The Lord will ask us for us, "What did you do with all of the time that I gave you? What did you do with all of the opportunities I gave you? How did you treat the people I put in your life?"

Lent is a season to ponder what our human journeys would be if we looked after those greater than ourselves. Lent is also a time to make conversions to our lives.

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Affidavit A versus Affidavit B

Continued from Page A1

yesterday announced that Lozada was preparing an affidavit on his "position" on the NBN controversy and was meeting with his lawyers.

"Mr. Lozada will surface in time and can be interviewed and he will tell the truth about what had happened to him," he reiterated.

PDI report confirmed

Romulo Quintos confirms an earlier Inquirer report that Lozada, and his close friend, Commission on Higher Education Chair Romulo Neri, had executed affidavits and recorded an videotape when they learn about the ZTE notes dealt for their safety.

Lozada, an information technology (IT) expert turned government executive, has told Sen. Panfilo Lacson and ZTE counsel Atty. Robert Jose "Joey" de Venecia III about the affidavits.

The executive secretary said Lozada was not abducted upon his arrival at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Tuesday but was placed under police protection upon the request of his brother. (See story on Page A4.)

Romulo said Malacañang would not respond to calls from testifying at the Senate investigation of the ZTE deal because it had nothing to hide or fear.

Privy to a lot of things

"We is free to do what he wishes," Romulo said of Lozada, chief executive of state-owned Philippine Rice Corp.

Romulo, a friend of Lozada's, is the first person who read Lozada's first affidavit and affidavit about it.

"I think he was privy to a lot of things," said Romulo, who met with Lozada several times and talked to him about what he knew of the ZTE scandal.

The convener of the BMW Movement said that on Tuesday morning, before Lozada boarded a plane back to Manila, he had met him a few months ago that year. "I am leaving this to God. I'm coming home. I will do the right thing."

But Lozada was stopped by government agents at the airport.

Warning

Romulo said the existence of Lozada's affidavit, which the Senate release contained in an unsworn friend, should worry those wanting to harm Lozada that he had obtained his version of the corruption that attended the ZTE deal.

"I think that was the reason there. To turn made an unsworn friend, should worry those wanting to harm Lozada that he had obtained his version of the corruption that attended the ZTE deal.

"I think that was the reason there. To turn made an unsworn friend, should worry those wanting to harm Lozada that he had obtained his version of the corruption that attended the ZTE deal.

Romulo said that because of the controversy over the resolution of Lozada, the existence of the affidavit was important.

"The challenge is it is on the special interest (of the public) that people know he has an affidavit," the BMW Movement convener said.

Romulo said Lozada showed him his affidavit but not over when the Senate was conducting its investigation of the ZTE scandal.

President's husband

At the Senate hearings, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband and three Commissioners on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos do were implicated in the ZTE deal.

Romulo recalled it was before Neri testified at the Senate on Sept. 26 last year that Abalos had offered him a P500-million bribe to approve the ZTE proposal to modernize the NBN project as director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Dr. Velarde accused Abalos of lobbying for ZTE in exchange for commissions and of offering him $10 million in December 2006 so his company would stop working or interfere with the NBN project. Abalos denied the allegations and resigned as Comelec chair on Oct. 1, 2007.

The Senate, head of Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr. (LAKAS), also accused the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, of bribing him to stop him from pursuing the NBN project.

AFP failed to get the NBN project.

Amid the controversy, Mr. Arroyo resigned on Oct. 2, 2007. The NBN deal, which was signed on April 21 last year by Trieva promotion Secretary Leandro Mendoza and ZTE vice president Yu Yang in ceremonies witnessed by her.

Corroboration

In his affidavit, Lozada detailed what he knew about the ZTE deal, most of which corroborated the statements already made by Dr. Velarde, according to Romulo.

"Most of what was written there had already been verified to it. It will corroborate what happened at a lot of meetings (about the ZTE deal, according to Romulo).

"Nothing the unexpected and bribery aspects.

He said Lozada also mentioned things that Neri had told Lozada.

Romulo said Lozada mentioned names, including that of Abalos.

Asked if there were other names, like that of the President's husband, Romulo said he could not recall.

Romulo said he only read the affidavits and did not take a copy lest he did he take leave.

"I don't want to have it. I don't want the burden of having that knowledge," Romulo said, adding he vividly remembered the opening line of the affidavit.

IT business

Romulo, who first met Lozada in the late '90s when they were in the same IT business, said he had sought out Lozada through a common friend when the ZTE hearings began in the Senate.

He said Lozada talked to him about what he knew and shared with him his affidavit because he knew he was with the civil society group and has access to media.

While Lozada's name was not mentioned in the Senate, he somehow expected that his name would crop up because he was present at a lot of meetings about the ZTE deal, according to Romulo.

"He feeling is that ultimately he will be (called about) because he was very visible to some people there," the BMW official said.

Later, Lozada expressed the hope that Neri would talk about everything so that he would not be summoned to the hearings, according to Romulo.

Death threats

Romulo said that during his meetings with Lozada, the latter confirmed the corruption in the ZTE project.

"I think he knew enough what was going on in detail. My sense was that there was fear (with) other (a) business (about the lottery). Judging (which) date (It was really that deep)," Romulo said.

He said that before Lozada left for abroad last week, he seemed free about the death threats he got.

"Target for life (false cure, brother)," Romulo recited back.

Romulo said he did not know then that Lozada had been summoned to the Senate and that he left the country hours before the Senate hearing.

The last time Lozada seemed happy was when he was about to board a flight back to the country.

Potential overpricing

Neri said Lozada, whom he tapped to examine the NBN project, raised concerns over the "potential overpricing" of the $329-million NBN deal.

Neri was the director general of the Neda, the agency tasked with reviewing government-to-government contracts, when the NBN deal on his top-priority list, was first was transferred to Child in August.

Neri said he asked Lozada to make a report on the project, but the latter did not, so he could not give details on the red flags that Lozada saw.

At a press briefing, Neri said Lozada, who "left during the meetings," was never part of the deal.

It was Neri's first press briefing after he disappeared a week ago to evade the arrest warrant issued by the Senate against him for failing to attend the hearing on the deal.

Lozada was supposed to testify in the Senate about his knowledge of the ZTE deal. His Senate appearance last week was postponed as Lozada left the country for long flying.

Neri said he tapped Lozada, a former executive of telecommunications firm Alcatel, to help him review the project as Neda lacked experts on information technology and broadband networking.

"He was not exactly formally a consultant, but you have to consult the people in the know. Neri said. "He was familiar with broadband," he said.

Victor Corpus

According to Neri, he met Lozada three years ago, when the latter was involved in a distance learning project.

He said that he was introduced to Lozada by former Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief, retired Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus, who was appointed Secretary Lozada.

Asked how well he knew Lozada, Neri said: "I can't say much except that he said he used to work for Alcatel and with IBM in the Middle East before that."

"He strikes me as very sociable, intelligent, and imaginative. He told me that he clothes (his blood)," Neri said.

Romulo recalled that a lower advisory of Malacañang in his work in PNC, he added.

Neri also revealed that Lozada called him on Tuesday night but the conversation was short. He further assured the media that Lozada was "in good hands and secured," although he admitted that he was "worried" for Lozada before the call.

"I was worried for a while and I didn't know the reason why. I feel for his wife and his five children but he called me up (Tuesday) at 9 p.m. He said he is okay," the Child executive said.

But when asked if Lozada disappeared his whereabouts, Neri did not give further details, saying Lozada merely told him he was fine. He added that he could not say if Lozada's tone of voice indicated that the call was made under duress.

PNP: We are protecting Lozada at his kin's request

Continued from Page A1

doesn't know where he is, it was not dissipated ... but we now are protecting him," said Chief Supt. Romeo Hiksom, chief of the Police Security and Protection Office (PSPO).

Hiksom said he designated four policemen to pick up Lozada and those who are currently protecting him.

Lozada, who arrived on Cathay Pacific flight CX-915 at 9:40 p.m. on Tuesday, "disappeared" at the Naia Terminal 1 before he could be picked up by the Senate sergeant at arms.

The Senate has issued an arrest warrant against Lozada and Romulo Neri, former director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), after they failed to appear or to testify on the now-scrapped ZTE deal.

Lozada returned to Manila from a prepaid trip to London "unexpectedly made to tell the Senate what he knew about the scrapped $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal awarded to China's ZTE Corp.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, and former Commissioner Abalos do have been linked to the allegedly tainted deal. Both denied lobbying for ZTE.

No obstruction of justice

PNP Director General Avelino Razon said that "based on an earlier Supreme Court decision, an arrest warrant issued by the Senate "will only be good within Senate grounds.

"There is no obstruction of justice here. In fact we believe we should enforce the law," Razon said.

He said the PNP was ready to bring Lozada to the Senate if he wants it. "If the Senate needs him, we can present him to the Senate," Razon said. "It depends on him of course. We can't force him."

But Razon said it was not the right time to allow Lozada to come out. "Not right now. He will leave for his safety. Maybe, it's safer for him not to come out yet until we determine if (it) would be safe to present him ... Our assessment is that there is a threat against him."

On the day that Lozada was to arrive in the country, a sibling of his requested police protection, citing threats to his life, Razon said.

Request in writing

The request was later put into writing. Usually individuals who ask for police protection make a written request to Razon, who has the power to approve or reject it.

"We (Lozada's sibling asked for protection, saying Ann Lozada was afraid for his safety. He is afraid that when he arrives, he would be arrested. So he requested the PSPO to give him security. When he arrived, this was formalized in a letter," Razon told reporters.

He said that Lozada was not "picked up" and that Lozada was "accompanied" out of the airport.

Hiksom, whose unit is in charge of providing security to VIPs, confirmed it was Lozada's sister Carmen who asked for police protection for his brother on the day of his arrival.

In due time

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Lozada would surface in due time.

Ermita said Lozada was not abducted but was placed under police protection upon the request of the brother's brother.

Lozada had since spoken to his wife and family, prompting Ermita to say that "the family cannot claim that Lozada was kidnapped because they know all along that he was under the custody of police officials."

On Tuesday, Lozada's wife reportedly appealed to authorities to let him see his family.

Ermita said he told Razon that to "let first opportunity" he should release a copy of the letter of Lozada's brother so as "to put the matter to rest."

Palace not worried

Ermita said Malacañang had not threatened Lozada. "I don't see how Malacañang will threaten anybody," he told reporters.

Asked whether the Palace would stop Lozada from testifying, Ermita said: "We will not. It's his call."

At one point, he told reporters: "What's there to be worried about?"

Hiksom also said that Lozada was "free to go where he wants to go. But people are just worrying him."

Hiksom said the PSPO was assessing the threats to Lozada's life. "(The threats) have to be validated. That is why we immediately gave the police assistance because something might happen ... (we will) prevent him from any bodily harm."

Razon said reporters that it was Lozada who said where he wanted to be brought upon his arrival. "It is not our safe house," he said, adding that he did not know if Lozada was with any of his relatives.

No kidnapping

The PNP chief denied the claim of Sen. Aloy Peter Upamano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee investigating the ZTE deal, that Lozada was kidnapped by government authorities.

"This is not a kidnapping because there was a request. A kidnapping occurs when a person is taken against his will. But in this case, this was out of his own volition, out of his own free will," he said.

Razon said "It's up to (the Office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms (Osaa)) to arrest him (so) we will be protecting him."

Not in Osaa

Razon said Lozada's guards would not cross inside with the Osaa.

At Osaa headquarters, led by Jaime Dimaculangan were to Camp Crame yesterday afternoon in a bid to take custody of Lozada.

But Dimaculangan said he expected Lozada to come out at the PNP headquarters. Dimaculangan said: "(Officials of the PNP) emphasized that he is not in their custody. He (Hiksom) people are providing security. He (Lozada) is not here in Crame, even if he arrived the place. They said if Lozada is called by the Senate, they are bring him," Dimaculangan said reporters.

Commission on Human Rights

The Commission of Human Rights said it would visit Lozada in Camp Crame today. In a media advisory it sent last night, the CHR said Commissioner Wilfredo Sevillano would meet with Lozada at the PSPO this morning.

The CHR said Sevillano had "expressed seem to see and ask Lozada whether he voluntarily submitted himself to be placed in PSPO custody."

"If not, there is definitely a human rights issue, which further would like to find out himself," the CHR advisory said.

Proper explanation

Razon said he would investigate why suspicions that Lozada was kidnapped by authorities arose and why some of Lozada's family members were unaware he had sought police protection.

He said police would make the proper explanation to the issue.

"We look into that—why there was some sort of confusion with the wife and some members of the family as to the whereabouts of Ann Lozada," Razon said.

In arms of family members

Both Hiksom and Razon said Lozada was fine.

"He is OK and safe and he is in the arms of some of his family members," Razon said.

The PNP chief also said that the PNP did not have an BOLO (Bagat Valderas ka, in sum), "(that) he had allegedly escaped Lozada out of the airport the other day.

Razon said the PNP was ready to answer any charges to be filed against it in relation to the incident. "We will show we did not go against the law," he said.

President's guards

Who is her a relativiness or were the President's men on a mission to pick up someone very special?

Airport sources yesterday confirmed being at least two officers of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) hanging around at the departure lounge of the Naia Terminal 1 on Tuesday afternoon, just minutes before Lozada disappeared.

As he himself had said his brother Arthur before his phone call to his wife, Lozada was allegedly picked up by airport officials against his will.

"I noticed that one of the PSG officers left around the time the (Cathay Pacific) plane connected to the tube (that led to the arrival gate) and went to the other way, but (no other one) stayed behind," said a source, who observed the comings and goings of guests and members at the VIP lounge on Tuesday.

PSG plainclothesmen

The source recalled that the two officers were in plain clothes. Some members of the media waiting for Lozada even recognized the two men as PSG officers, who normally assisted VIPs at the Naia.

Airport officials, however, said the PSG did not have nothing to do with Tuesday's events and that they were there just to perform their regular duties.

"They were just there probably because they had someone to assist. They had nothing to do with it," said Angel Aquino, airport security chief, an official known to be close to the First Family.

"I do not think their presence had any relation to Lozada's arrival. They were fetching somebody who is arriving through Gate (gate) Anibong," said Gracelle "Bing" Lim, Naia terminal manager and operations chief.

Mysterious police officer

Both Aquino, a retired general, and Lim admitted to being present when Lozada was brought out of the terminal but pointed to a police officer, Valderas, as the one who came forward claiming to have been authorized to take custody of Lozada.

The PSG has a contingent assigned to the airport on a rotely basis.

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security force to assist arrivals or departures of the VIP terminal, members of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) and other Palace guards. Officers in this detail are given special access passes to all airport areas, including the highly restricted ramp through which Lozada was said to have been spirited out.

Another source related that the PSG officers had said they were not both a passenger from a Singapore Airlines flight coming in that afternoon, as Lim had said. They, however, did not give the name of the passenger and, unlike during normal situations, had no prior coordination with airport authorities, and no pass permission.

Yet another source recalled talking to one of the PSG men who said he and his companion were at the airport to assist a passenger, this time one who was leaving.

The human sources requested not to be named because they were not authorized to speak on the matter and for their security.

No security breach

Finally speaking about Tuesday's confusion, Lim told the inquirer that he and Aquino were the two who Valderas picked up Lozada.

"We were there, (in and) out of airports, but that's not a problem because we were just monitoring," he said.

Lim added he was a good distance away from Valderas and Lozada when the two came out Pasay's arrival Gate 7, from where the passenger was taken to the departure area, and then down to the ramp.

"There was no breach of security because there was coordination with us and we did not make the flow of passengers to be affected. If Lozada had taken the regular route," he said.

While the PNP had said there was no such police officer named Bagat Valderas, Aquino and Lim said they checked the identity of the man who went to the airport claiming to have been deputized to take custody of Lozada.

"I do not have a record but he had an ID that we had verified ... that's why what I told you is reliable," said Aquino.

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PR 503	MNL-SIN	Tu/Fr/Su	08:20	12:00
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PR 209	MNL-MEL	Tu/Fr/Su	20:30	07:40
PR 211	MNL-MEL	Mo/Th	09:00	23:10
PR 209	MNL-SYD	Tu/Fr/Su	20:30	10:40
PR 211	MNL-SYD	Mo/Th	09:00	20:10

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Senators up in arms over Lozada abduction

From page A1

Lacson wanted of a constitutional crisis with the Palace "wielding power in the form of the barrel of the gun."

Sen. Benigno Aquino III called the abduction "one of the government's most brazen acts of impunity." Sen. Francis Pangilinan assailed the PNP for serving like President Arroyo's "private army."

Even administration ally Sen. Richard Gordon insisted that the Senate, not the PNP, should have been given "custody" and allowed to carry out Lozada's "arrest." Sen. Alan Cayetano called an airport call, which he picked up, "hilarious" from the Office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms (Osaa) which were supposed to serve Lozada on arrest order.

"I suppose it's the PNP and PNP is part of the Executive Department," Villar said when asked. He believed that Malacañang was behind the abduction.

Villar, who personally arrested a Russian call from Lozada's wife Violeta on Tuesday night (pleading for help to locate her husband), ordered the Senate blue ribbon committee to convene a hearing "within 24 hours" to summon airport and police officials, including PNP Director General Avelino Razon.

"We want the PNP in court to see to life Lozada and explain its role in what happened," he said.

He described what happened to Lozada as an "abduction," which he said has no place in democracy.

Lozada was summoned by the Senate last week to testify on the alleged anomalies in the $329-million NBN deal with Chinese firm ZTE, which was shouted last year due to allegations of bribery and overpricing.

The Senate cited Lozada in contempt and ordered his arrest after he failed to appear at a Senate hearing on Feb. 1.

Senator Cayetano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee that leads the investigation of the NBN deal, said his staff had assisted Lozada's wife to file a petition for the writ of habeas corpus in the Supreme Court.

"Under the circumstances, the Senate did what it could. The State officials gave us the runaround. There was complicity, there was a plan hatched, because Senator Aquino himself was not even allowed inside the airport," Cayetano said.

During the plenary session, Cayetano dropped with Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago's motion that the Senate had no power to order a person's arrest and should have sought the PNP's assistance first.

He said the Supreme Court had already upheld the Senate's power to arrest persons, when the high court upheld the 2005 arrest of Presidential Committee on Good Governance Chairman Camilo Sabio.

Sabio was held in contempt by the Senate for refusing to answer questions during a hearing.

For Aquino, who joined the Osaa team at the airport to meet Lozada last Tuesday "the issue at hand is not what her Mr. Lozada's power to compel his will or not by the PNP."

"The issue at hand is that the PNP has no legal authority to continue to keep him in its custody. It continues to do so constituents a direct affront to the Senate's power to enforce its investigational authority," Aquino said in a privilege speech.

Aquino reminded the government that "in many cases, the highest tribunal of this land has ruled that when offended by people of this institution is held in contempt these who blatantly defy its lawful order."

"Should they continue to disregard the Senate's authority, then itself over his body in immediately cause their arrest and detention until such time that they recognize that we are a co-equal branch of government," he said.

Senator Lacson, who offered Lozada as a Senate witness, said the PNP "should not be surprised if they want to wield power to the barrel of the barrel of the gun, then we might as well forget democracy" he said.

He said Blue and PNP officials would be subpoenaed to a hearing "to find out who's the boss."

"Now we are headed to a constitutional crisis," said Lacson.

Gordon lambasted the PNP for preventing the Senate from taking custody of Lozada.

"The PNP should have given custody to a coequal branch of government. The Senate has a right to arrest," he said.

Senate Majority Leader Pangilinan also lambasted Razon, saying "the PNP is not and never should be made a private army of influence occupies Malacañang."

"It should never be tendered to any cover up, in any human or in intimidation of witnesses or in an attempt at a whitewash," he said.

Even Santiago agreed that there was a lack of transparency in the PNP's detention of Lozada.

But Santiago said that Senate could only request but not order the police to serve its warrant.

Members of the Black and White Movement held a vigil for Lozada at the Senate grounds last night. Aquino and Lacson joined them.

The movement said Lozada's wife was given a glimpse of the missing witness sometime at around midnight on Tuesday night.

"One of his siblings said Mr. Lozada was thrown his husband for a very brief moment, before he was whisked away. That's what all the sibling told us, no details as to where and what exact time," said Black and White spokesperson Leah Navarro.

Navarro said what happened to Lozada should spur all Filipinos who wanted to know the whole truth behind the ZTE deal.

Members of the House of Representatives, including allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo, also lashed out at the "Lozapo-like" abduction of Lozada.

Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III said the abduction "reminds us of the martial law days when Marcos's dirty tactics of the disappearance of Lozada while emerging from his security is like the beginning of we been hit. Ninoy Aquino on Aug. 21, 1983," Tañada said.

"Ninoy went home to tell the truth. Lozada went home to be could tell the truth before the Senate. I hope what happened to Ninoy won't happen to Lozada. I worry and I fear for his safety," he added.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, a member of the House opposition, said the Arroyo administration must put a stop to the "systematic cover-up on the NBN-ZTE deal."

'Gestapo methods'

"The abduction and disappearance of Lozada demonstrate the extreme ways equal to Gestapo methods of the Arroyos in trying to protect themselves from damaging disclosures," Ocampo said.

Ocampo said that a few years ago Senate witness on the Jose Pidal memory homicide controversy Liling Mabanag disappeared and surfaced to recant the earlier statements. (See "What went before" above.)

WHAT WENT BEFORE

History of witness abductions

ON AUG. 26, 2003, BONBON "Ulong" Malvar, 21—Sen. Panfilo Lacson's principal witness against First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo's alleged money laundering activities...was "rescued" from the senator's "safe house" in Tagaytay City by his relatives and then hooting our Michael Defensor.

Malvar, Lacson said, had to be asked to be rescued from Room 203 of Milestone Hotel after overhearing two of the armed men guarding him talk about his "liquidation."

Malvar's brother Jojo, a policeman, barged into the room and took Lacson's witness from his guards. Jojo then took his brother to the sen where Defensor—a former sponsor at Malvar's 1997 wedding—Malvar's wife, daughter and another brother were waiting.

Just the previous day, Malvar claimed during a press briefing that he personally witnessed Arroyo, his wrestling godfather and his neighbors sign as Jose Pidal in bank accounts in which the President's husband supposedly kept more than Dollar million in secret campaign contributions to his wife.

Lacson accused Malacañang of abducting his witness to prevent him from recalling, bribing and Malacañang had nothing to do with the "rescue."

On Sept. 2, 2003, Malvar recanted his earlier statements, saying he told lies out of spite. Malvar said Malacañang, Arroyo's accountant and secretary had accused him of stealing a cell phone and cash from Arroyo's Makati office, where Malvar was working as messenger.

The Dubie case

A similar "rescue" happened on June 13, 2005, when Arlene Dubie ...the alleged source of the "Hello Garci" tapes ...was being held against his will by their National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Samuel Ong at the Ina Carlos Seminary in Makati City.

The same day, Bishop Socrates Villegas took Dubie out of the seminary compound and turned him over to the military.

Dubie later denied giving Ong the alleged audiotape recordings of phone conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano on how to rig the results of the 2004 presidential election.

Dubie recanted this statement during a Senate inquiry in September 2007. Under oath, he said he was part of an intelligence team that monitored and record the "Hello Garci" conversations, and that he went willingly with Ong to the Makati seminary. He also said he lied earlier only because he feared for his family's safety.

Arlene Dubie, however, said this was difficult to believe because she and her husband had been estranged since 2003. She said her husband never cared for her and their children. Cyril L. Bonalaoto, Inquirer Research

... but his wife runs to SC for help

From page A1

Cabinegat of the Philippine Air Force, Maj. Andrew General Manager Orlando Lim, Brig. Gen. Romeo Poquiza of the Presidential Security Group and 1Lt. Roger Valeroso.

Lozada's brother Arturo also filed a habeas petition.

Sister-in-law Lozada

Lozada's sister Carmen told the Tribune she had seen her brother in the custody of people who took him on his arrival, but declined to give details, saying she could not talk freely. She said Lozada was alive but looked "thin and haggard."

"Magpa-ng ang pamilya ko ("Take care of the family," Lozada quoted her brother, the 11th of 13 siblings, as telling her.

Violeta's lawyer, Melisanta Sta. Maria, said he had no knowledge of the veracity of claims that Violeta and Rudolf Jr. had met so that the latter could transfer his wife of his safety. Sta. Maria refused to discuss anything in relation to the family, citing "safety reasons," he said.

"Be that as it may, even if it was true, this will not change our stand. We still want to file this petition because what is at stake here is the freedom of an individual," Sta. Maria told reporters.

Police claim denied

Asked about the police claim that law enforcers' assistance was sought to keep Rudolfo safe after his plane landed at Naia, the lawyer said he or his client was unaware of such matters.

"So far as I know, we don't have any communication to that effect. But the pleadings were just signed by the aggrieved wife just this morning, so until a formal and substantial and continuing communication has been made to us, we should safeguard the freedom of this person," he said.

"We know what we know do we just have to make sure that indeed he is alive, that he is restored to freedom," Sta. Maria said.

'Detained against his will'

In her petition, Violeta pointed out that her husband was arrested but not on the basis of the warrant that the Senate had issued for his failure to attend the hearings on the $329-million broadband deal. The makers his arrest illegal, she said.

"Up to the present, petitioner Rudolfo Noel Lozada Jr. is being detained against his will and without any legal authority by the respondents or people under their control and supervision," she said.

She is also undergoing emotional distress because of what happened to Rudolfo, and is prone of threats against those who sin against the NBN scandal.

Turbulence ahead for airport security chief

From page A1

asked whether all these happenings had somehow spoiled his special day.

Though the birthday boy wasn't amused, he still prepared a hour of his spiny hearts—pulsos, tang, mixed vegetables, shrimp and pancit—at the office yesterday.

After today's bash, though, Amadeo better brace himself for further bashing.

Lawmakers and critics of the Arroyo administration yesterday demanded an immediate explanation from Amadeo and several other officials concerning Lozada's "disappearing act" at the Naia on Tuesday.

Lozada, an environment official and prospective witness in the Senate inquiry into the allegedly overpriced National Broadband Network project, was first reported to have been kidnapped by government agents upon arrival from Hong Kong.

Sticking to story

In the Inquirer interview yesterday, Amadeo stuck to earlier pronouncements that he and airport operations chief Generoso "Ring" Cruz merely escorted a certain NPO4 Roger Valeroso as the airport where the policeman took custody of Lozada.

He also maintained that the Arroyo personnel who were supposed to serve an arrest order on Lozada at the airport "came in too late"—or after Valeroso had already whisked Lozada away.

The Inquirer learned that the room set by the Senate sergeant at arms was allowed access only up to the airport's arrival lobby, still a walking distance from the gate where Lozada was said to have been "assisted" by airport officials.

The Senate had no coordination with us. They said this Roger (Aquino) arrived (in secret Lozada) but they were too late. They were already late," Amadeo said.

"It indeed the Senate had coordinated properly, you know how much minutes we entered in NIA," he said.

Official statement

In a statement, Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) General Manager Alfonso Cruz said airport officials were only after "the safety and well-being" of Lozada.

"Based on the personal account of Amadeo, he acted on his sound discretion since it was Mr. Lozada himself that asked for protection," Cruz added.

He said airport officials only wanted to make sure that Lozada's arrival would not cause any commotion or disrupt the flow of passengers at the airport.

"We just performed our mandate making sure that passengers feel safe and convenient when they arrive at or depart from Naia. As far as the Miaa is concerned, we only treated well and nice to the Lozada but for the millions of passengers that we serve every year," Cruz said.

But Cruz said the Miaa would still investigate "the manner by which Lozada was taken out" of the airport so that the security procedures were violated.

NO BIRTHDAY BASH Malacañang chief, retired Gen. Angel Atienza, unexpectedly gave no his birthday bash yesterday. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Palace junks corruption case vs Tesda director general

From page A1

tenary Edwardo Ermita said that while Tesda paid for the publication of Bajaro's "Salaban ka ng Pilipino Soul," Tesda's bids and awards committee (BAC) is a distinct entity body approved the transaction.

Ermita said there was no issue of gross neglect of duty against Bajaro in the printing of the guidebook on Tesda's "Judicial and education" detailing concerns stories of non-all school youths who attended vocational schools and landed good paying jobs.

"Bad faith can never be presumed. Since it was not proven, the benefit of the doubt should have regularity in the performance of their duties. The modification of the audited documents with respect to Bajaro, is warranted," Tesda said.

5 liable

Bajaro has maintained he should not be held liable since he did not gain financially from the printing of the book that was distributed for free to Tesda students.

STYLICO. Off the hook

But the five members of Tesda's BAC remained liable for approving the P9.2-million printing transaction without any bidding, the resolution said.

The resolution said that Presidential Management Staff head Cesar Sarmiento, chair of the committee of Tesda's bids and awards, and 1Lt. in the Office of the President referring Bajaro's motion for reconsideration for appropriate action.

Malacañang earlier cleared Bajaro's case to the committee of power on a memo dated Jan. 15 in the Office of the President referring Bajaro's motion for reconsideration for appropriate action.

Malacañang upheld PAGC's decision, which recommended the dismissal and forfeiture of the bare pension of the five members of Tesda's BAC and barred them from future employment in government.

Good faith presumed

Ermita noted that Bajaro was not supposed to have acted in good faith.

"The reliance on the recommendations of the other respondents of the Tesda BAC is therefore legitimate," he pointed out.

Although the PAGC found a flaw in the procurement method, it ruled that there was no injury to the government, Ermita said.

The Office of the President "having determined that there was no injury to the government in this case, the liability for grave misconduct is lacking in substance. Hence, Bajaro cannot possibly be held accountable for gross misconduct," the resolution said.

Teves, Gatchalian spotted: Another Wack Wack deal?

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WHAT WERE THEY DO?

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile seems to know after he was informed that Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and photo king William Gatchalian were spotted playing golf together at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong City, where the ever-present National Broadband Network deal was also launched.

In an interview, Enrile said he was disturbed by reports that Teves and Gatchalian were seen on regular playing partners at the Wack Wack golf course especially when the government lost about the P123 million in import duties from the power generators illegally smuggled into the country by the National Petrochemical Alliance (NPA), a joint venture between an Iranian firm and Gatchalian.

"I will definitely ask him (Teves) one time we summon him in his next hearing at the Commission on Appointments," said Enrile.

Teves made a verbal hearing during the CA hearing Tuesday where Enrile lectured him for their incompetence in allowing the entry of 1000 power generators and the inexplicable reductions in the tax on a premium cigarette brand, Pall Mall, from P26 per pack to only P6.74 per pack which resulted in P1.68 billion in tax losses annually for the government.

Chairman Intelligence officer Ruben Fragoso, one of those opposing Teves' appointment, based the alleged smuggling of 36 container vans filled with power generators which Teves did not act despite being made aware of the dubious shipment.

Enrile has called for the filing of graft charges against Teves and his staff to which Sen. Francis Escudero agreed.

"I support the effort of Senator Enrile versus smuggling. I believe that we don't need to raise more taxes, we just need to improve our collection of existing taxes to boost our collection," said Escudero.

Enrile said that unless Teves could explain the issues raised, he would not recommend the latter for finance secretary.

Enrile also took Teves to task for unduly delegating key decisions to his office to his Undersecretary Gaudencio Mendoza.

"Passing on the exercise of judgments is an underlying, a something wrong in my view. Maybe necessary reasons, but where there is a decision to be made, then it is the secretary that must assume responsibility in the delegation," said Enrile.

Sulu execs poised to file suit vs AFP

JOLO, SULU... THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNment is finalizing charges against the military for the killing of eight civilians in Malmalong, Indanan—among them children and a pregnant woman.

Gov. Sakiyalan Tan said he was just considering documents needed for the filing of the charges before a criminal court, as well as administrative complaints.

The eight civilians were killed in what the military claimed was a legitimate encounter in Barangay Ipil on Monday but civilian officials said they could not believe how hapless women and children would be able to the guns of the soldiers as the military had claimed.

The provincial board passed a resolution calling it a "massacre."

Arab Mindanao party-list Rep. Hadja Nasmia said is seeking a House inquiry into the incident involving Army commandos.

Hontoman, in his Resolution 438, said there were reports that one of the cadavers brought to Jolo town proper was a woman clothed only in underwear. Another report said one of the victims was actually an army informer made to lie flat on his stomach and shot twice to the head in front of his wife.

Hadja Jeanette Loez, executive director of the Muslimah Human Center based in Zamboanga City said their own under inspection in Malmalong indicated that the victims were all "brutally killed."

"All the children were hit in the head," she said.

Maj. Gen. Nelson Allage, commander of the Western Mindanao Command based in Zamboanga City, said their final investigation on the civilian deaths indicated that there was indeed an encounter in the village.

During the operation, aimed at arresting two hostages of the Abu Sayyaf rebel group, two soldiers were also killed, Allage said.

Nonetheless, Allage stated that the military investigation, which was still ongoing, would be fair and that there would be "no cover up."

Inquirer learned that among those involving the military investigation was Task Force Comet chief Maj. Gen. Reuben Rubid, the commander who has jurisdiction over the military unit involved in the Malmalong incident.

Jose Manuel Mamasig, director of the Commission on Human Rights in Western Mindanao, said they would also undertake their own investigation into the military's claim that some of the deaths were "collateral damage" in a legitimate operation. Julie G. Alipala and Ed Cernard Inquirer Mindanao

Esperon okays transfer of detained officers, soldiers

By Nikko Dizon

ARMED FORCES CHIEF GEN. HERMOGENES Esperon Jr. yesterday approved the transfer of 27 detained officers and enlisted men from Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal to the headquarter facilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

Esperon said the transfer of the detained Army Scout Rangers and Marine soldiers led by former Marine Commandant Major Gen. Renato Miranda and Col. Ariel Quendolen, would facilitate their court martial hearings.

"We can facilitate the hearing because some of them are already here in Manila and some of them are sick... It will also be good if they are here in Manila because this is secure... so that those who are sick can be easily rushed to the hospital," Esperon told reporters.

Esperon noted that enrolled around, former Scout Ranger commander Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, has been detained at the controlled center of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Lim has been detained in Camp Crame along with Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and some Magdalo officers following the Nov. 29 Magdalo Peninsula standoff.

Two other accused officers, Marine Cols. Armando Bunay and Amando Cayhigal, are detained in a military hospital in Cavite.

Army Capt. Dante Laugloi is detained in the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio.

Defense lawyers, however, strongly opposed the transfer to Judge of the 24 officers still in Tanay, and Frisco Cruz Angeles who represents Army Scout Ranger Capt. Robert Consolino.

"Considering the stringent security requirements of the Judge and I have doubts there, we are not going to be allowed full and free access to our clients the way we had before. We will have difficulty determining their state of health, much less determine whether or not they are sick or what's happening to them," Angeles said.

Esperon said the transfer was recommended by Col. Arnaldo Sibayan, camp commander of Camp Capinpin, adding that it "will not be permanent".

Angeles said the defense lawyers were their clients to remain in Tanay for their own safety while local military presence, Lt. Col. Hilarion Lag, remained in the Judge.

A contention caused at the Army stockade in Camp Capinpin late yesterday afternoon after military executions tried to handcuff the Marine and Army Scout Ranger officers accused of conspiracy in the failed February 2006 power grab.

Quendolen's wife, Maria Fe, said there was a gentleman's agreement between the detainees and camp commander, Col. Arnaldo Sibayan, that they would not be handcuffed since they had already agreed to be transferred to Camp Aguinaldo.

Gov't asks court to reverse ruling on Bulletin shares

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ASKED THE Sandiganbayan to overturn its ruling awarding more than P153 million in proceeds from two time deposits to the estate of Hans Menzi and his holding company, which used to own the majority shares of the Bulletin Publishing Corp.

Government lawyers said that the Menzi estate and Hans Menzi Holdings and Management Inc. (HMHMI) have no valid claims over the funds, pointing out that its executor had testified in 1999 that the proceeds were returned to the Equitable Bank, the owner's depository bank.

They also said that the court's lifting of the sequestration was merely a resolution to the "incidental question" of whether or not there was prima facie factual basis for the issuance of a writ of sequestration and cannot be considered a settlement of the case.

In its ruling dated Jan. 17, the court's Fourth Division said that Time Deposit Certificates Nos. 152828 and 152829 with Philtrust Bank, representing the proceeds of the sale of 154,470 Bulletin Publications shares in 1985, were not part of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth.

In the ruling, the court also ordered the bank to release the funds to Menzi's estate and HMHMI.

The two time deposit certificates form part of three bank deposits that the Presidential Commission on Good Government is claiming for the government as part of the ill-gotten wealth of the late Defence Professor Marcos. A third certificate worth P19.39 million has already been forfeited in favor of the government.

The case stems from the Presidential Commission on Good Government's decades-long claim to declare the estate of the late Manila Bulletin publisher, Hans Menzi, a conspirator with Marcos as also part of the dictator's ill-gotten assets. In 1987, the PCGG issued a writ of sequestration against all shares of stocks, assets, properties, records and documents of HMHMI.

The Supreme Court affirmed a Sandiganbayan 2002 ruling that the Bulletin shares of businessman Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. which had been transferred to HMHMI were ill-gotten and forfeited them in favor of the government. The shares were sold back to the Bulletin in Feb. 14, 1988 for P1.5 million. Ironically, the same P15.39 million, including interest, that was ordered forfeited in favor of the government. Jeanlyn R. Ty

Clinton, Obama split Super Tuesday ...

From page A1

majority of the state's 72 delegates.

The Democratic caucuses in New Mexico remained contested. Clinton had a 117-vote lead when the party shut down its voter counting operation near 11 a.m. EST (1600 GMT).

Crushing blow to Romney

McCain won the Republican race in California, inflicting a crushing blow on his closest partner, Mitt Romney.

McCain, the Arizona senator, was almost halfway to the 1,191 needed for the nomination, far ahead of his rivals. He won some of the most populous states—New York, Illinois, Illinois, in addition to California.

It was a remarkable comeback for a campaign that nearly unraveled last year.

"We've won some of the biggest states in the country," McCain told cheering supporters at a rally in Phoenix. An ardent backer of the surge in Iraq, he proclaimed himself the front-runner or last and added: "I don't really care if you like it."

Romney won in Massachusetts, where he had served as governor, and Utah, where fellow Mormons supported his candidacy. He also won in North Dakota, Minnesota, Colorado, Alaska and Montana.

Surprisingly strong

Mike Huckabee, a Baptist preacher and former Republican Arkansas governor, had a surprisingly strong performance, using his support among southern Christians to win in Georgia, Alabama, West Virginia, Tennessee and his home state.

Texas was the first state for Huckabee since he narrowed the political constituency by winning the Iowa caucuses, the first major contest of the campaign.

Neither Romney nor Huckabee appeared able to overtake McCain, but both vowed to stay in the race. "We're going to win this thing," Romney told supporters in Boston.

Allocation of delegates

Super Tuesday marked a shift in the exhausting campaign to select US presidential nominees. While early contests helped candidates build momentum, Tuesday's votes were about winning the delegates who would select the nominees.

Democrats had 1,681 delegates at stake. Republicans had 1,023 delegates.

The allocation of delegates tugged the race ever-so-slightly. That was particularly true for the Democrats, who divided their allocation of delegates roughly in proportion to the popular vote in each state.

McCain had 561 delegates to Romney's 246 and Huckabee's 134. It will take 1,191 delegates to clinch the presidential nomination at next summer's Republican convention in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Superdelegates

Overall, Clinton had 753 delegates to 677 for Obama, one of the 2,025 needed to secure victory at the Democrats' party convention in Denver.

Clinton's advantage is partly due to her lead among so-called superdelegates, members of Congress and other party leaders who are not selected in primaries and caucuses—and who are also free to change their minds.

Blacks and Hispanics

Clinton had long been the front-runner in the Democratic race. Her campaign has emphasized her experience as a senator and first lady. Obama, a first-term senator, has offered a spirited challenge, carrying a message of change and hope after years of political gridlock in Washington.

Already the campaigns were looking ahead to contests today in Louisiana, Nebraska and Washington state and Feb. 12 primaries in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC.

Overall, Clinton was winning only a slight edge among women and white voters, both groups that she has won handily in earlier contests, according to preliminary results from interviews with voters in 10 states leaving polling places.

Obama was collecting the overwhelming majority of votes cast by blacks, and Clinton was getting the votes of roughly six in 10 Hispanics.

Democrats and Republicans alike said the economy was their most important issue, according to preliminary results from election day interviews with voters leaving polling places.

Democrats said the war in Iraq ranked second and health care third. Republican primary voters said immigration was second most important after the economy followed by the war in Iraq.

The survey was conducted in 16 states by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International for The Associated Press and television networks.

Large lead in exit polls

McCain crushed Romney's rumors with a large lead in national polls. Trailing heated up between McCain and Romney on Tuesday, with McCain attacking his opponent for having a "terrible record as governor," and Romney retorting that he must be a strong contender if he occupies his rival.

McCain, a veteran senator and former Vietnam prisoner of war, has campaigned on his national security experience. His reputation as a maverick has won him support from independent voters and moderate Republicans but alienated conservative Republicans who form the party's core constituency.

He has rebounded sharply after his campaign last year appeared to have collapsed, jumped up a division in endorsements in Iraq that came on the back of a 131 troop increase there that McCain had advocated.

He also benefited from the failed campaigns of other rivals, including former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Sen. Fred Thompson.

McCain is expected to be a formidable rival for either Clinton or Obama at a time when Democrats are hoping Americans's dissatisfaction with President George W. Bush, a Republican, will help them win the White House.

If he should win the presidency, McCain, 71, would be the oldest US first-term president when inaugurated. AP

SIGNS Hillary Clinton wins the state of New York (and husband ex-US President Bill Clinton seems pleased) in the biggest primary day in US history. Still, neither Clinton nor Barack Obama, her closest rival for Democratic presidential nomination, established a decisive lead. They divided the 22 states and split the number of delegates available within each state. AP

IT'S STARTING TO LOOK LIKE HE'S IT For the Republican presidential nomination, John McCain wins a commanding lead, sweeping a series of delegate-rich primaries. AP

Kampi wants JDV out before merging with Lakas

From page A1

the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) wants the head of De Venecia as a "precondition" to the proposed merger with the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD).

Eustos Santos Uy, the floor leader, spokesperson of the Government Leagues, said De Venecia's position as Lakas-CMD presidential hail "became untenable" following his acrimonious ouster as Speaker on Monday and the installation of Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles as the House leader.

"So it is anti-Arroyo already" said Fuentebella, who resigned from Lakas-CMD last week and announced he was joining Kampi.

Executive Secretary Edurdo Ermita parried reporters' questions on whether De Venecia should now stand down but he suggested that Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, the party executive vice president, was capable of taking over Lakas-CMD.

Senate President Pidel Pimentel in a separate news conference yesterday dismissed talk of De Venecia getting the party.

"There will be no immediate changes in the Lakas-CMD leadership setup," Ermita said, adding that he did not expect the merger to happen immediately.

"This is a process that will take place over time with continuous consultations among leaders," the party's president continued said.

"The Philippines can enjoy enduring peace and sustainable development, and thereby win a better future for the coming generations, only if we indicate our unity of purpose, unity in values and teamwork in nation-building," he said.

Ermita said the fight for the speakership between De Venecia and Nograles on Monday was an integrity matter similar to the battle between Senator Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the presidential nomination in the Democratic Party in the United States.

He said that De Venecia had assured him that he would remain as party president, considering that he was a cofounder of Lakas-CMD in 1992 and president of the Greater Democratic Institutional (GDI), Asia Pacific.

Reconciliation

Ermita also said that he was already working for a reconciliation between Mr. Arroyo and De Venecia. He said this would be a difficult task because consensus were still high.

He said De Venecia's corruption allegations against Mr. Arroyo and her family were not new but he said he hoped that De Venecia would present evidence to support his claims.

Fuentebella, a political lieutenant of Mr. Arroyo, said the impasse that ousting the five term Speaker from Lakas could be part of "confidence building measures."

"Right now, there are cracks in the relationship between Lakas and Kampi because the Lakas president attacked the administration. If he wants to save the Lakas party, I think he should consider seriously giving up the position of the party president and hand it over to an Arroyo-friendly leader," said Fuentebella.

National directorate

The face of De Venecia could be seen during the meeting of the Lakas national directorate on Feb. 21. "There's a definite possibility," said Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, secretary general of Lakas, at a press conference in Manila yesterday.

Camarines Sur Gov. Elmo Villafuerte, chair of the Governors' League, said that the Kampi presidency was brave, but the Secretary Rosalio Pascua, had talked about the merger before the issue of ousting De Venecia came up.

Pecoc, who said the impasse about the merger two weeks ago, was with Ermita yesterday to discuss the "mechanics" of the merger. He said both parties had formed a committee to discuss the plan.

Pampanga Rep. Edgardo Lakas spokesperson, said the idea of a merger had been raised as early as the last 13th Congress.

"There's no reason why we should not merge. We're supporters of President Arroyo's programs. Also's the chairman of the party" said Zubiri who was among the 35 House members who voted to retain De Venecia as Speaker, as against 174 who unseated him.

End to hostilities

Bicolanos, Pangasinan, Mayor Eustaquio Guiao, president of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, said a merged Lakas and Kampi would end hostilities not only in the national level, but among party mates in the local level.

Rep. Victor Agbayani, the only congressman in Pangasinan (which has six districts) not to sign against De Venecia, said that the split between the President and the former Speaker would affect the administration coalition with the 2010 elections "just around the corner."

Lakas leaders may start looking for other options, Agbayani said.

He cautioned against forcing De Venecia to give up the Lakas presidency, saying "it might not be necessary."

"He deserves a leadership position in the party and just any position. For me, he needs no position like the speakership to be recognized president of the party" Agbayani added.

Cardinal: Church ignored on choice of JPE wife as Vatican envoy

From page A1

point diplomatic representatives, the Church should also be consulted especially because the diplomat would be dealing with the Pope," Rosales said in an interview after his Ash Wednesday morning Mass at the Manila Cathedral.

Rosales stressed that the appointment of Cristina Pesce Estrella was a "sensitive one" that needed the support of Philippine Church officials but he conceded that the Church could only "criticize, point out, make suggestions."

On Saturday, the Department of Foreign Affairs confirmed Cristina's appointment although she had yet to receive her letter of appointed from the Holy See.

Surprise resignation

Rosales said the resignation of Leonida Vera as ambassador to the Vatican had caught the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines by surprise.

He said the problem did not know about the resignation until Vera came to Manila in the DFAF process assembly last month.

"It was all too sudden. Even I was surprised," Rosales said. He said he did not know if politics was behind Cristina's appointment.

"The newspapers report about that angle, but I have no knowledge whether this is true or not," he said.

Several bishops last week said that the Arroyo administration should consider both moral and professional qualifications for the post following reports that Cristina would be sent to the Vatican.

JPE to the rescue

While the appointment of an ambassador to the Holy See is a purely political function, there is always a "moral dimension" to the process since the envoy will represent the country as the central government of the Catholic Church, according to the prelate.

Senator Estrella yesterday said his wife was qualified for the post and that President Arroyo engaged Arroyo was well within her rights to make the choice.

"Even our separation of Church and state provisions state that the ambassador will represent all the people of the country as a state, not only Catholics but all other religious groups," he said.

Estrella's nomination still be sent to the Commission on Appointments today for its approval, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said last night.

Told about Rosales' statement, Ermita said he couldn't "not recall" that there was such a "requirement" for the Manila archbishop to endorse Estrella's nomination.

"The President is just exercising her usual power to appoint people," he said in a phone interview.

Ermita also said that Cristina was "very qualified, there is no question about it." With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño

SEC junks Imee's bid vs GMA7

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION (SEC) has dismissed the petition of former Rep. Imee Marcos to stop the initial public offering of the television firm GMA Network Inc., the network announced yesterday.

A SEC official knowledgeable about the matter who requested not to be named confirmed the dismissal.

GMA Network pushed through with its listing at the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) on July 30 last year, raising P7.7 billion from the IPO.

Marcos, daughter of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, had alleged in her petition that GMA failed to disclose that the shares held in the name of one of the television network's three majority shareholders, Gilberto M. Duavit and his family, were merely held in trust for the Marcoses. This, she said, constituted an act of misrepresentation.

The SEC, through Corporate Finance Department director Justina F. Callangan, dismissed Marcos' allegation, stating that the obligation to disclose matters pertaining to Marcos' claim over the GMA Network shares "has not yet arisen" since the Duavits "categorically claim ownership over the subject GMA shares in their own right and that no pending case impugning the ownership of the said shares has been filed in court by Marcos against the Duavits."

The SEC, according to documents provided by GMA, also said that "the rejection of GMA Network's registration statement cannot be granted because the company's registration statement was already rendered effective by the Commission last July 16, 2007."

The SEC also said that there is no apparent misrepresentation as to the ownership of the disputed GMA Network shares which would have been a ground for suspension because "Marcos failed to allege even a single pending, legal proceeding where the issue of legal title over the subject shares has been raised."

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Hospital blunder killed RP nurse, inquest concludes

LONDON—A NEW MOTHER from the Philippines was unlawfully killed when an epidural drug was mistakenly fed into her arm via an intravenous drip, a jury at a British coroner's inquest into her death said Tuesday.

Mayra Cabrera, a 30-year-old theater nurse, died soon after giving birth to a son at the Great Western Hospital where she worked in the town of Swindon, western England, on May 11, 2004.

Following the delivery, a potent epidural anaesthetic, Bupivacaine, which if given at all should have gone into her spinal cord, was wrongly fed into a vein on her arm. She died of a heart attack before her son survived.

The jury of six women and three men took more than 17 hours to decide that gross negligence by the hospital, in particular the sub-standard storage of drugs in the maternity unit, led to her death.

Killed unlawfully

"Mayra Cabrera was killed unlawfully," the jury foreman said, citing gross negligence.

Her husband, Arnel, was originally told she had died from an amniotic fluid embolism—a rare condition in which fluid surrounding the developing fetus inside the mother enters her bloodstream and can cause a fatal shock.

But he learned a year later after instructing a lawyer that she had in fact died because the epidural had been wrongly administered, allegedly by the midwife who came on duty just after the birth.

She denied having done so in evidence, claiming she thought the anaesthetic was a saline solution or blood volume expander to boost blood pressure.

The month-long hearing at Trowbridge, near Swindon, was told there had been two other deaths at British hospitals in the last 10 years caused by the intravenous administration of Bupivacaine.

The potent local that storage of the drug at the hospital's delivery suites was "chaotic" and did not meet health service guidelines.

Arnel Cabrera—who said his life was "ripped apart" by his wife's death—is facing deportation from Britain with the couple's son, Zac, because as a widower his immigration status automatically changed.

He was granted permission to stay and work in Britain in 2003 on the basis that his wife, who arrived a year earlier, was also working here. He is pursuing a civil claim for damages against the hospital.

Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust had earlier admitted liability for the death.

In a statement to reporters after the inquest in Trowbridge, Lyn Hill-Tout, chief executive for the health trust, said: "For a tragedy to be caused by a shortfall in care is something we deeply regret.

"This tragic case should not have happened. I sincerely hope other hospitals and maternity units like ours will be able to learn from the bitter lessons that we have learnt."

Coroner David Mannes said he will be making recommendations to the government on how to improve storage of potentially dangerous drugs in hospitals.

Cabrera's death has led to a cruel twist in her husband's legal status in Britain, according to media reports which said Arnel Cabrera has been told he is not allowed to stay now his wife no longer works in the country.

The Home Office said it could not comment on individual cases, but a spokesperson said: "An applicant, who does not meet requirements under immigration rules, can in exceptional circumstances apply for discretionary leave to remain in the UK.

"We need to receive an application through for us to consider it," she added.

The Crown Prosecution Service, which initially said there were no criminal charges to be filed in the death of Mrs. Cabrera is now reviewing her case. AFP Reuters

Zed wants NTC issue settled, welcomes probe

MOBILE PHONE CONTENT AGGREGATOR Zed Philippines yesterday welcomed the investigation by the House committee on information and communication technology on value-added service providers.

Zed country manager Jay Pedro Adversa said in a press statement, "This is welcome development as Zed has been trying to resolve this issue with the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) for some time now as we are committed to complying with all official rules, regulations and laws of the country."

Zed, a Spanish company, was invited to the hearing to answer allegations in House Resolution No. 399 co-authored by Representatives Justin Chipeco and Florencio Noel that the company is not registered with the NTC and does not comply with the 60-40 nationality capital structure requirement for VAS providers.

Rep. Joseph Santiago, committee chair and himself a former commissioner of the NTC, said there is a need to ease some ambiguities as technology has already overtaken some provisions of Republic Act 7925.

He said the committee is disturbed with the lack of competition of NTC commissioners and intend to issue a subpoena should they fail to appear in succeeding hearings. He said that for as long as the issue with the NTC is not resolved, investors will not come because of the uncertainty of the business environment.

Chipeco said there is a need to look at the definition of a value-added service (VAS) provider as there is no distinction with that of a content provider. He added that this ambiguity is open to the interpretation of the NTC.

Rep. Teddy Boy Locsin said he sent a letter to NTC Commissioner Ruel Catobas to inquire about the legal basis for the 60-40 nationality capital structure requirement. He asked the NTC representative why another foreign operator, Information Gateway, was allowed to register but did not accord the same privilege to Zed.

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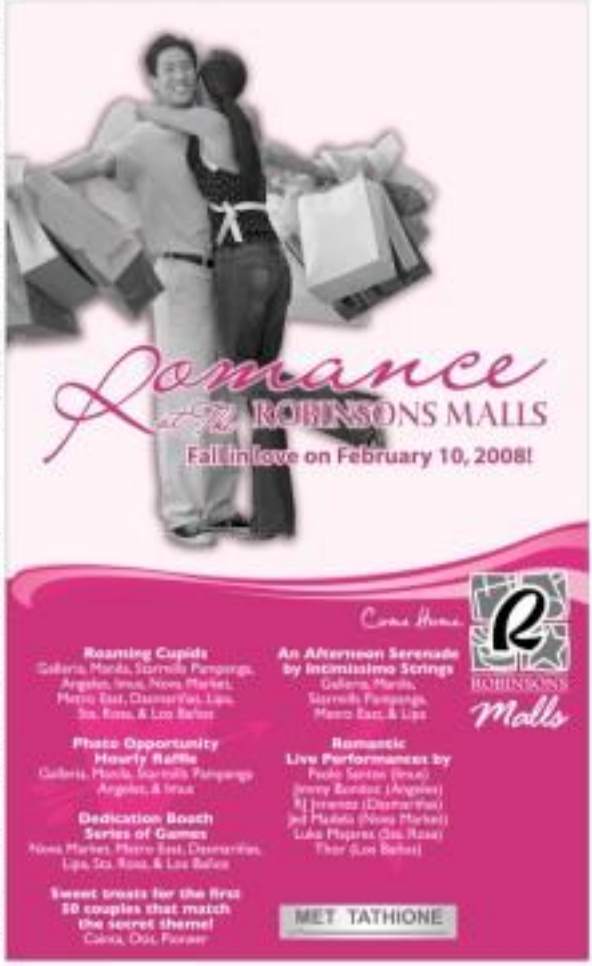


PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Official kidnapping

RODOLFO LOZADA JR., A POTENTIAL WITNESS in the Senate's continuing investigation into the ZTE controversy and the subject of an arrest warrant issued by the Senate, was seen by airport officials and police officers as soon as he got off the plane the other day—and then vanished.

As of the time of writing, Lozada remains virtually incommunicado, in a still undescribed location. He is, apparently, in police custody—at least that is what Director General Avelino Razon of the Philippine National Police said yesterday.

EDITORIAL

But Razon has issued misleading statements before, even deliberately; his belated announcement that Lozada, the president of a government corporation with alleged insider knowledge about corruption in the ZTE deal, was actually in police custody all this time raises legal and moral issues. They can be summed up in one question: Can the police, under the Arroyo administration, do whatever it wants?

Consider the following facts that have come to light:

Lozada left the airport in highly unusual circumstances; after he was met right at the airplane door, he did not pass through the immigration or customs counters. This allowed him (and those escorting him) to evade the Senate officials waiting at the airport to arrest him. Is it now the PNP's responsibility, under Razon, to keep Senate witnesses away from the Senate and its agents?

When Lozada left the airport terminal, he sent a text message to his brother, saying he had been abducted. Razon has said that Lozada was under the custody of the Police Security and Protection Office, the unit that handles VIP security. Is it now the PNP's responsibility, under Razon, to detain VIPs against their will?

Lozada's sister said she saw him hours after he arrived, looking thin and haggard; well, she is reported to have said, he's still alive. She said she could not say, however, where Lozada was being held. Is it now the PNP's responsibility, under Razon, to choose various ways to keep secrets?

Razon waited an inordinate amount of time before declaring that the potential witness—cited for contempt by the Senate when he unexpectedly left the country—was in police custody. Is it now the PNP's responsibility, under Razon, to detain people in secret?

As of the time of writing, Lozada remains out of sight, and separated from his own immediate family. Razon said Lozada had not been kidnapped, because he or his family had in fact requested police protection. But Lozada's worried wife filed a writ for habeas corpus with the Supreme Court yesterday to compel the police to produce Lozada. If the alleged letter of request is genuine, it is exceedingly curious that Lozada's wife knew nothing about it. Is it now the PNP's responsibility, under Razon, to fabricate, in the public it is supposed to serve?

The truth is, Razon and certain trained officers in the PNP are doing Malacañang's dirty job—and they know it. Lozada, a close friend of former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, has inside information about the ZTE deal. He left the country because he was not ready to testify before the Senate; now that he has come back, the Arroyo administration wants him either to keep silent, or to sing a different tune.

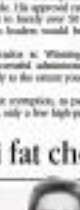
It is not as if this is the first time we've seen the Arroyo administration's unique Witness Protection Program at work. As in the cases of whistleblowers Ugong Mahiwatay and Vidal Doble Jr., the administration's special operations department enabled potentially hostile witnesses to recant potentially damaging testimony.

Razon's feeble statement, that the police were ready to protect Lozada if the Senate asked for him, is an outrage. Of course, the Senate wants him. That is what his arrest warrant is for: to compel him to testify. And that is exactly why the Senate sergeant-at-arms went to Camp Crame, to the very unit Razon identified as holding Lozada in custody.

It is no surprise that Lozada wasn't there! This is how a police state is born: first they detain us, then they make us disappear.

The giant next door

VIEWPOINT



Juan L. Mercado

"YOU NEED FOUR THINGS TO SUCCEED IN Indonesia," went the joke spawned by the 32-year long Suharto reign. "First is Foota capital. Second is British management. Third is Japanese equipment. And fourth is Indonesian general."

But wisecrack came to mind when the Indonesian president died last January. By then, the 86-year old Javanese general suffered over a decade in comfortable house arrest, like Joseph Estrada's Tanay detention. Popular Foys were contrapuntal and vitriolic prices forced him to quit in May 1998. Indonesian courts ruled in 2000 that he was physically unfit to stand trial for corruption and massive inheritance of human rights.

Indonesia changed in that span of time. How much is seen in cabaret hosting of a United Nations conference on graft. Indonesia generals in mufti on dais forget (double function) rule: one finger on the trigger, another in the cookie jar. Pin outlining like Marcos' "Rules 12," distributed down-to-exercises that hang out, with the truth, corruption records.

UN conference delegates saw, for example, Transparency International's annual listing of "The World's 10 Most Corrupt Leaders." Suharto topped it, with embezzled funds attempting to hoiwest $15 and $35 billion. Ferdinand Marcos came in No. 3 with $5 to $10 billion. At $78 to $80 million, Estrada swelled himself to slot No. 10.

Indonesia is a footprint for Southeast Asian stability. Its population of 240.8 million is almost triple that of the Philippines. It has oil. Despite debouncing on the corruption-scan Filipino leagues' ground, its remaining forests remain "the lung of Southeast Asia." Indonesia ranks 130th, one of 177 nations, in human development, behind the Philippines at 84. And its leadership stamp sellers who would inflame this giant, the largest of Muslim countries.

Date the long pull, government in Indonesia will affect the Philippine mess than which type gets to be Speaker of the House of Representatives. Thus, informal comments, by an experienced Filipino journalist, comparing leaders of so the dictatorships of Marcos and Suharto, are relevant. On retirement, Eddie Ladlaw was carrying with Paul Steven Jennell's Washington business. Prior to that he worked with the Philippines Herald and as DZRH News correspondent in Tokyo. Ladlaw writes:

"What's troubling in some outside observers, like myself, is that in terms of democratic consolidation, the Philippines and Indonesia may be on opposite trajectories. The last lesson, in dynamics, is moving forward, albeit slowly but with promise of further gains. Enough despairing things are happening in Philippine politics to cause one to worry. It may be going backwards.

"President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has been in office for more than three years. Does the MPR's fortunes compare with those of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo? The reward is mixed. But overall, he's done a good deal better by his people than Gloria has with hers.

"Like Gloria, he started with high expectations. His 2004 election was a mandate of unprecedented scale, as he won the first directly elected president. And Indonesians filled the streets that September, Magnanyag like enthusiasm. The euphoria, of course, was unsustainable. He approved ratings did slide, from the 80s to barely over 50 percent—although Western leaders would be ecstatic to have as much.

"The democratic paradox is: Winning big doesn't guarantee a successful administration. Your program works only to the extent your legitimacy allows it to.

"SBY has gotten superior exemplars, to part of his mandate. But so far, only a few high-profile graftees have been jailed. A slew of crooked businessmen fled abroad, some safely harbored in Singapore, until an extradition treaty can be worked out. Public concern for the dying Suharto to kept his personal wealth untouched for the longest time. But now that he's been laid to rest, expect the prosecutors to go after his children.

"Corruption in the public sector is endemic. But this is due to an unspoken tolerance for poorly paid civil servants picking up extra income so long as it isn't obvious or highly scandalous. It will take a generation or longer to bring government up to Western standards.

"But overall, this is less depressing situation than what you have in Manila. SBY himself is clean as is his family. And on his point alone, his is a tolerably more honest administration than GMA's.

"SBY has taken a few knocks even from his supporters for being too sensitive to not desirable. He needs to break some eggs to make an omelet. But I'd take this slow-to-act, God-fearing man as president any day rather than the dazzle-the-public methods of Mrs. Arroyo.

"The story here do edge even SBY, though, in the management of the economy, at least for the short term. Of course, his borders has been eased by the huge dollar remittances sent home by overseas workers. God forbid where the money would be without them.

"The potential, too, in Mindanao for it gave no Moslem or any religion in competing for overseas jobs. Indonesia doesn't have anything like our Silicon Valley component and ability to pull in those billions of expatriate earnings.

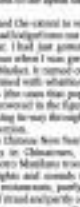
"SBY may face a strong challenge in 2009. That includes from Megawati, who to reduce bitter after having been trounced by SBY the last time around. But most voters will give him credit for what he has done so far. They'd give him a new mandate with just a few less votes than he got in 2004. If the 10 has a vote, it'd go without hesitation to Gloria."

* * *

(E-mail: jmercado@pnpi.net)

'Kung hei fat choy'

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

THE BAD NEWS IS THAT RATS, AS INSIDERS say, "are highly ambitious and strong-willed people who are keen and unapologetic promoters of their own agendas, which often include money and power. (They) can be terribly obstinate and resembling, insisting on having things their way no matter what the cost. These people tend to have immense control of their emotions, which they may use as a tool to manipulate and exploit others, both emotionally and mentally. Rats are masters of mind games and can be very dangerous, calculating and downright cruel if the need arises. Quick-witted and aggressive, they will not think twice about enacting revenge on those (but) that them in any way."

This year, 2006, is the Year of the Rat in the Chinese lunar calendar, and in New York we celebrate today, according to legend, Buddha invited all the animals to come to his bed from farewell as he departed from the earth, but unfortunately only 12 heeded his call. The 12 came in this order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. For his charity, Buddha rewarded the rat by naming him first among the 12.

The rat would have been first, except that at the last minute, the hurling rat bounded over his back and beat him by a hair. Which makes the bad news even worse: That is definitely someone we know. But who? Who?

The good news is that just as Filipinos also say, "an charming, persuasive and charismatic. Rats consider others before themselves, at least sometimes, and avoid having their ideas stolen others. Rats are fun in their dealings and expect the same from others in return."

Ah, but that is someone we do not know. This must be somebody we don't know.

But whatever the Year of the Rat's day or happy implications, if at all it has any I'm glad we're celebrating Chinese New Year's Day. Just as I'm glad we're marking, if not celebrating, Ramadan. Ramadan is Islam's Lent. Since it much of it has been forced upon us the first by the rulers of the Middle Kingdom and its growing influence upon the world, and the second by our need to appease the Muslims who do not just pose a threat to the South for our muscle or another but who give troubled to millions of Filipinos in the Middle East. Whatever the reason, it's making us a lot less parochial, or a lot less tied to the apron strings of Hollywood.

The first time I realized the extent to which the Chinese New Year had indigenized was when a Japanese teen last year. I had just gotten off the MRT station in Cubao when I was greeted by hordes of farmers' Market. It turned out to be a group of people armed with whistles and drums and firecrackers (the ones that popped rather than exploded) dressed in the figure of a rising and dragon snaking its way through the tables of the fast-food section.

Not too long ago, the Chinese New Year was celebrated largely only in Chinatown, with tourists and curious Metro Manilans trooping down to take in the sights and sounds (and smells). And in Chinese restaurants, partly out of their owners' sense of fraud and partly out of their desire to have in more customers. Today you see it proclaimed everywhere, in government centers and largest joints alike, in Chapin and Ayala alike. And along with it, an entry of southeast and long-short dresses come to purchase the good or bad tidings about the impending hymn.

I personally see more reason to welcome it other than that it helps an shed off our parochialism. At the very least, it should help us crash back into hospitality. Inquiry against the Chinese. Which is really the strangest thing, given that most of us have Chinese blood in us. I have I do, regularly from my mother side. The prejudice continues to smolder today, probably shorted rather than shorted by the fear they will soon dominate this country's economy. Which is the even strangest thing, given that the Americans have been doing that for the last century and we do not regard them with fear and resentment but hold them in awe and admiration.

Culture is where the attitudes really change, the more popular the culture the faster the change. I suspect basketball and Manny did more to improve the African-American image than Jesse Jackson's sermons on that term in lieu of "black" or "Negro." I suspect "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and the Years of the Rat and other animals I myself was born in the Year of the Rabbit will do more to improve the way we regard the Chinese than a series of Chinese-Western weddings where Donald Dee's antics.

At the very least, it should help cure us of our strange malady of lying at the heart of Asia Pacific but neither being Asian nor Pacific. Or more specifically of our bipolar conditions of hating our body honored in the flesh and our mind or soul honored in the West. We're mangled, of course, to be part of Asian affairs (we're a pillar of the mission), but we're never really been part of it culturally because of our course. Linchpinned by a religion, Christianity, that has transplanted our soul in foreign, specifically the Vatican, rather than in the hearts of Islam, or Buddhism, or Hinduism. There's a rat would tell them waiting to be discovered, whose histories and traditions stretch back longer than Moses's civilization.

Who knows? Maybe things like the Chinese New Year can prick our curiosity enough to spur us to embark on that voyage of discovery, like Columbus driven by the love of spice, or like a death gives the first class of a gigantic parade. Historically, labor is the replete and sounds (and stars), drums same dim sum predictably with the tail of that dragon's breath transporting us what called mayan, and shout, "Kumpai!"

Kung hei fat choy everyone.

Politics of revenge

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassumo

THE FIRST ONCE SAID THAT "FOR ONE HOUR of power, some many a year of noble well lost." This was so true last Monday morning, when for one shining moment on the Manila skyline rumbled, medal pulsed, took a back seat to a counter way of normal eyes-glaring, full of joy and goodwill. A truckload of medium-security prisoners were given leave from their Muntinlupa compounds in Monday's Bagong Araw. Together with singer Gary Valenciano, Office of ombudsman of goodwill, the members of the College Guild of Sampaguita Camp Bilibid Prison serenaded Palace officials and employees, led by Deputy Executive Secretary Cling Magsar and National Commission for Culture and the Arts Chair Virgie Lobrades. Applauses led by US Amb. Kristie Kenney and the US family on the Mission Hotel, unfortunately, President Macapagal-Arroyo was not there to appreciate their singing. St. James B. Bunoz, R.C. pen is sent from Muntinlupa, Bilibid Prison, Bunoz, pen is sent from the dispatch and the prisoners are the line sheep." As in the Good Book, Monday's flag raising was filled with the joy of welcoming "prodigal sons." Meanwhile and conductor Jerry Dalaig of the Makina Bantilocks Choir promised to "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land." Amen to their words. It was another feather in the cap of NBC-CD Executive Director Cecile Afuada.

* * *

The country of Iran de Venezia as Speaker is hoping that the people and country will be a long time. His successor, Speaker Prospero Nograles, is hobbled by the perception that he's the "proxy of Mike Arroyo." The public will doubtless give him the benefit of a honeymoon, but it will be tough to do his mission.

But if Nograles has to adjust to his new role, so too should JDV. He has to calibrate his moves now so as not to be perceived as stubborn and suspicious. Some who had caused his ouster. He also has to be careful that he doesn't become a man of all opposition to the President. Some groups in their own agenda. Since we have just been interrelated, it might be good to remind JDV to keep pushing his call for a "moral convention." Time. He appears moving into a lot of suspicions from many quarters, e.g., "Why only now? Why he of all people?" But when the dust of battle settles, his critics might acquire a gentler tone, because he has undergone tremendous pain and suffering which justify and many religious leaders are supporting.

The line of Lakas as a party is going to be muddied, too. If JDV is going to be vacated as its president, as some party members want, it would be interesting to see how Lakas President Ronald Kaiser would deal with. JDV disclosed that after his extraordinary speech, can-do president called him up to express their support. FVR and Joseph Estrada. FVR wants a merger of Lakas and Kampi, with JDV retaining the presidency of Lakas which is of more founded, but the amendments of the situation cannot escape observers.

* * *

Many people wondered why JDV got only 38 votes, given his long tenure. That night, as I strolled the swing, I was reminded of Senator Sen. John Osmeña's words long ago: in the House there's only one seat, and it is that of the President. Listening to the members explain their votes, it was striking how many professed gratitude to JDV and rambled when he did for the House and for them, too. In the end, it was a question of survival, especially for the first-term congressmen who hardly need public works projects to ensure reelection, to use common sense, judge that not only each for sine pledges of projects Burnoy's or those voting for his ouster. As for urgent Rep. Sadiri Sumulong, pen is, there's no such thing as independence from mismanaging.

* * *

The congressmen were most vulnerable to the friendly persuasion of Rep. Hilary Deveze, who vowed like a protective guard to the contender to the ball. JDV's fighting spirit attracts, as the media noted, he burned his bridges with GMA, also received some that burning a Speaker who was at odds with the House would be bad for the House. A good number found themselves squeezed between loyalties, among them Reps. Victor Ortega and Rogelio Arenas. It's noteworthy that majority of the 37 who stuck with JDV are longtime in their seat who can afford to be independents. Rep. Raul Alar and Antonio Cuenco, Sabel Lagman, Teddy Boy Locsin, Manny Villar, Sonia Gidong, Boy and Pedro Romualdez. One of the 35 was Rep. Cynthia Villar. Senator President Manny Villar's wife, whose explanation for her "no" vote was that she didn't want anyone to suffer the pain she suffered when Villar was ousted for disparaging the impeachment resolution against President Arroyo. Cynthia said the Villars suffered little, because that bold move because Manny's sidekick in the Senate and perhaps in the presidency in 2010.

* * *

A big issue that rages of the long tenure was Representative Mitos, who represents Cebu City and strong, JDV's cousin. What didn't sit well with people was that he and not others tried to persuade JDV from leaving what would be his farewell speech. The lack of fairness was pressured by Representative Teddy Casiño, leader of the Bayan Muna Party-list. He is looked at of all he cared about was swinging for last Saturday. Former Speaker Ramon Mitos, whose presidential bid was lost by the for the treasonous of Arroyo. Mitos had the 120 penalty asked by JDV.

* * *

Reminder: Reminiscable, the international minister-time helps calling marriages, will have another stay-in healing weekend for troubled couples from Feb. 8 to 10 at the Mother of Mercy Spiritual Center, FVR Road, Tagaytay City. For inquiries, call Fr. Rene Ramos 09175-9929-911 or 323-0388. Sally 421-6023 or 0918-8126363. Nenen at 681-3746 or 09161-9954-643, or Gene at 0917-8526-115. All calls will be held in strictest confidence.

Labels

I WAS HANGING OUT WITH MY FRIENDS IN A COURT CORNER, lazily leafing through the newspaper, when the trio of an article caught my eye. It asked, "Photographer or digital artist?"

Since I take pictures for fun and upload them to a photo sharing website on a regular basis, I read on. The author, Stan Lapik, opined:

> Time from one minute his photos with photo editing software to the more popular I guess is Adobe Photoshop, then to a set of a photographer's to a digital artist.

That made me think because I use Photoshop to tweak my photos. In fact, it was only about to cutting and sharpening the photos. Then, my lovely hand taught me how to adjust brightness and contrast, eyeses and levels, I learned selective color and were copy-and-paste for a while. Now, it's all about taking the time effects, taking the fish-eye and dabbing dashes. With Photoshop, it seems like the possibilities are endless.

Am I a photographer or a digital artist?

My family and most of my friends consider me a photographer because I always carry my digital camera. Recently, one of my pictures was used by a well-known pharmacy group for its give-away calendar (I wasn't paid though, just promised free calendar). But somehow I feel a bit uneasy about being called a photographer, although I do take pictures.

I remember reading a few years back that with the accessibility of the Internet and the proliferation of blogs, everyone has suddenly become a writer. I found that observation catching since I had graduated with a journalism degree and for after I had spent four years in school, the person blogging was in no to be bestseller sell was a "writer" in word.

Anyone who's was photography should definitely ponder the question. With every other person on their coming a digital camera, everyone is claiming to be a "photographer" pun as everyone with a blog is now a "writer."

What is my profession? Photographer? I have realized that perhaps, I really don't want labels. I wish my journalists because I have loved writing ever since I can remember. "Time flies when you're having fun!" perfectly describes my college years, because I hadn't much of an idea anyone that it were to be a fun, school life. You can go to the whole girls to my college graduation picture from a little away.

I didn't enroll in the journalism program just as I would be called a writer. Mentoring into photography was a serious step because we had a couple of photography classes. Now, even, I want to be a photo because I didn't "shoot" photo. for lack of a better word, I paint and shoot, and then it's fun happy when I get a good shot. I'm it go when I shot. My hopeless would be that I be fun shot and DEDICated to really passionate about learning video and techniques! but for now, I have no plans of getting technical about it. Instead, I'm having fun and hoping to be the best I can be.

So maybe I should not call myself a photographer, just yet. But I don't think I'm a digital artist because I don't tweak my photos that much.

However, a friend keeps telling me to shoot. "Have you have made that shoot, I can't wait! you will make progress to my 'fine,' he says." But if you choose to be a better shoot, you will go to where. Choose one."

Being called a photographer sounds cool. But for now, I'm having too much fun with Photoshop to choose just yet.

Gladys Pinky D. Tolete, 27, finished journalism at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

YOUNG BLOOD

Gladys Pinky D. Tolete

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twenty-something and below. — Ed.

Sanctuary

Chez Zenith

SESSION ROAD IS LIKE MY LIFE. DURING THE DAY, IT IS a busy place, full of people going about their busy lives, with me a limited to venue as they walk up and down the road. But at night, when people go home to their families, the road becomes deserted, devoid of life except for the occasional noise from the light, traffic and some night owls. It becomes an entirely different place, lonely and

I grew up in Baguio. I love walking up to the fresh smell of pine and the calculating fog that makes me feel like I am on top of the world. Walking up and down Session Road has become a habit for me. Sometimes I walk for hours on end, so leaving home is a little like a city adventure for me.

Every time I find a hard to breathe because of the busy life. One, I stop. There I find myself on the road that is the front of my city. I gaze around, looking at the street lamps and the billboards advertising all kinds of stuff. I feel my face tingling from all the walking and somehow I feel some relief, if not bliss.

I used to hate it when people from everywhere came to watch the Flower Festival, filling the road and leaving a mile garbage. I hated it when all I would see were people walking around, someone else the road was mine and that I wanted them to leave my city.

Then I realized that I was one the only person trying to seek refuge from a cut and lonely world. Otherwise, I would be here, to go away from their dark lives. And that was when I slowly realized the people I walked with. I knew that like me, they wanted more than just a lonely life.

When I stay on Session Road, the road always reminds me to keep hopeful again, to keep myself warm, to continue walking, up and down the road. Sometimes, I stop at my favorite coffee shop and have a cup of the bitter liquid that seems to muck my soul to soon. I sip the heavenly concoction while staring at the rain outside the window. I glance at the clock and rush to wonder why I am here, where I would be home, reading a podcastbook and warm in my bed. Then I remember that when I stop to my own own, I seek a little comfort.

I get up to leave a chair and start to walk again, ready to go home. I can see the city lights up to announce the coming of the sun. I cross the street and hail a cab, and finally I arrive my own home.

As soon as the sun arrives, the road comes to life again. I am back in my town, eating my sweet rice and my tired, broken heart.

Session Road sanctuary for just another road. It is my life.

Chez Zenith, 25, is a news leader in a call center located in Bagsan City.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@philstar.com, pls together with your address, age and the school course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

Live from the Bastusang Pambansa

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

SPEAKER: "MR. WILL NOW PROCEED WITH nominal voting. Call the roll."

Clerk: "Republic Lahar."

Sapin: "Mr. Presiding Officer Gracias, may I explain my letter?"

S: "The unidentified gentleman has been recognized for minutes."

S: "Mr Speaker, I come here with a heavy heart but a broader smile, and for that reason, much as it pains me, in the name of my district, may I mention my gratitude to the President for this opportunity to speak on this occasion. Yes, for change! But broad change, Mr. Speaker, but the kind of change that stood us in good stead, when we were here in Malacañan in good times in peace. Truly, I am a man of peace, and I am a President's man, when, after all, people, too, and as by serving them, we all serve... the people. I vote YES."

C: "Gangad, Mindo."

Gangad: "Parliamentary inquiry Mr. Presiding Officer Gracias."

S: "What is the parliamentary inquiry to the unidentified gentleman?"

C: "Why I know if our proceedings are being recorded for posterity?"

S: "The Majority Floor Leader Gracias will answer!"

MFL: "Yes, well, uh, the independence of the public chamber is unquestionable. You see, I am a man of peace, and I am being accused of it. So is this, and of course you, uh, all know the Ranking Minority Floor Leader Lisanne Gilles... they are there, behind the uh, peopleds..."

S: "Is the floor ready to explain its letter?"

S: "The unidentified gentleman has been recognized minutes."

S: "Thank you, Madam, for those its blessings, which we are about to receive, through that Executive Order, which, I am sure, will be the Report Series of Budgets and Management. Amen."

S: "Rano, Alando."

Rano: "Is the Presiding Officer Gracias, may I explain my letter?"

S: "Yes, I'm about."

R: "My name is Congressman Alando Rano. R-U-C-K-T-O-N-E-T Thank you, Madam, I vote YES."

Lim: "Lim, Lee Lopez. YES. YES, YES, YES. That's me. Manolo Barrio. R-U-C-K-T, who, uh, YES. Thank you. I'm I get more more I would like yes yes."

S: "Unfortunately, that is the House, not the Cemetery, you only get one vote here."

C: "Gamido, Sampaio."

Gamido: "Point of information, Mr Speaker, but how I explain my letter..."

S: "What is the point of information?"

Sa: "I would like to know, on behalf of the constituents' petition, also-limited, spiritually of natural limitations of my district, where we are, we shall my say, development assessment..."

S: "The unidentified gentleman is directed to the floor to make his point of information."

Sa: "Thank you. Without further ado, I vote YES! This country needs change! Lots of it! And now, Mr. Speaker, I must excuse myself to convey a cultural visit."

S: "The unidentified gentleman need not straighten his tie to meet on the date of his debate."

Sa: "Otherwise, Mr. Speaker? Not the kind of a call of nature?"

S: "What is the one you are not required to meet his visit immediately to the South Lounge."

C: "Sun, Bernard."

Sun: "Hey you. I will now explain explain, but I need to crack this so I can. Because I like Mitsubishi."

S: "The distinguished, charming, handsome gentleman from the district in which he was born, but, too also has, by the Grace of God, some charm from the clouds to demean himself by serving the people, and, of course, meditation, in consideration of his movement blood ties to our glorious."

C: "Hualdup. All of you. I'm our here, lo, so hey you but I'm here, ng, so well... I'm here. Lo-ng-ing. Long. Long. Well, we were... I'm right and SOMEONE HAS TRIED TO MAKE ME BEHAVE."

MFL: "Mr. Speaker, may I make a motion to have the minority, I mean, minority, worlds we are heard, heard and distributed in every language in this country?"

S: "Any objections? Does anybody dare? Hearing none, so ordered."

C: "Ilonga, Gaston G."

Ilonga: "Mr Speaker, in saying his, lesser explain my letter by saying, the only thing permanent in this world is change. We change whatever. We change dollars. We change in appearance. We are always changing. We change our minds. We change our ideologies. We change our loyalties. The most we change, the better we become. Because, in truth, and I say this to all minority with sour sentiments, the only time we do not change is when we die. And, Mr. Speaker, so quote the great Thomas Jefferson, I vote YES! Thank you."

S: "The motion is carried. Aide is dispensed. The new speaker, Ian Jay Rubio, will now give his inaugural address."

Speaker: "Ian Jay: "Measures are there, looking in here. Means of sinking and no power. Where years thinking are in trouble? Never dead here than doubt in the Core. Ye gods, what's there years ago? Compare no gifts. Ay mine's right. Peace, peace, peace. Ye gods! Only. Who why cause on Mars at, I ask."

(Applause. Meanwhile, Nola sells the media. "Around the world, experiment more.")

Father Geremia forgiving Norberto Manero

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Cecra P. Dayo

HAVE WHAT THAT THERE WA MINUTES MUCH BEFORE. relishing delights and plunged into so much lovely "Ma'am" Norberto Manero. Ma'am, Ma'am, what darkness had he seen? What visions, what dreams?

Fr. Peter Geremia, a man so outwardly distant yet so inwardly prone, had written in a diary his experiences, thoughts and most importantly, his poetry. Recently, his poetry collection was published in this country. I was fortunate to be allowed to read his diary which was later published as a book ("Portraits and Bloodstains: The Diary of a Missionary in the Philippines"). Long before this book came out, I did a magazine feature, titled "The Diary of Fr. Peter Geremia."

Through his non-diary he very evocatively, almost sensitively, let some of us see his sure, the disorder of life and enhance our appreciation of life. Many times, we take as a prepared people's inner story, disclosed and kept in our man's popular cap.

Geremia sometimes to walk with all of us in his religious claim, he wrote through the Roads of Calgaria, the equator of Tondo and the blood in this house, in his photoelectric towards of his land.

He should have been deadly now. It was he who was trained and supposed to be pastoral death by paramilitary forces who "shots of darkness of the line Italian Fr. Tullio Favali, his co-partner in Sitio Sumok Cotabato, on April 11, 1985.

Geremia's diary of the 1980s is frowned with deep horror, pain and sadness. Bodies broken and drenched with people's tears. Blood, sweat and embers hollow the mission fire, his prayers rise above the wailing, the pain stroke and the sobs.

Patently, magnanimously, the diary reveals life in Mindanao, the land of the Lumad and Bangsamoro, is lived on living but somewhere painfully short and drowning. There are instances of prime and hatred, and rise into the prime drifting into a circle of fire. The wise remains, he is mercilessly smashed against the rocks.

Also part of the diary are theological and historical reflections and reviews of books by Geremia to read where the guns were silent. In reports to superiors and members, he would be dispassionate and scholarly but where he writes about ordinary people, he was becomes ordinary than a passionate, prophetic, vulnerable... a priest.

Better man can also be contemplative men, and contemplatives are not people who have complicated lives and who do the world. Poets, the mystics in Latin America have come a wealth of writings that show how to actually linked action struggle for justice was with the spiritual life. "The Gospels, Journal of Brother Ric, Children" Sister in this. Which strong and powerful poetic image, theological and theological words melting burning worldly issues. Trappist monk, Thomas Merton of "Seven Story Mountain" have produced volumes of them.

Geremia also belongs to the Steadfast Internal but the Steadfast Internal belongs to the Geremia. In the simply calls himself a "wounded healer" and although his wounds are not physical, they are real, and it is through his portrait that his inner experiences find expression.

Geremia was born 71 years ago in Canal di Sondrio (Lanto of the Gold) near Torino in northern Italy. A child of war and destruction, Geremia saw his hometown of that death period in history.

With all these as his inner, I read with relishing of pains the four twelve years diary of Geremia and Manero.

"Manero weak, receives forgiveness from Italian priest for years of sin." This was the headline of a story in the magazine's front the Italian priest.

The story said that murdered priest killer Manero who was recently released from prison was reunited with Geremia, the priest whom he had planned to kill 10 years ago. Fr. Tullio Favali was the Italian

The real issues hounding Cheaper Medicines Bill

THE PUBLIC SHOULD NOT BE SHIELDED FROM the real issues hounding the Cheaper Medicines Bill. While legislators and opinion-makers debate on the provision that removes the doctor's prerogative to write the brand names, both from generic names, on their prescription slips, the media must not be interpreted as a doctor-versus-patient issue. Rather, at the heart of the government's lack of resolve to ensure that poor patients are given access to quality and affordable medicines, it must be viewed as a strong public clamor be needed, safe and effective medicines.

If any legislation that aims to provide accessible and affordable medicine is to be meaningful to ordinary Filipinos, then the involvement of brand are covering a billion-dollar industry, protecting and giving concessions to local drug manufacturers, serious implications of the National Drug Policy (including the Generics Act), and creating an accessible Drug Price Regulatory Board. Unless these essential issues are attended with full public participation, then the objective of addressing a long-standing problem will again be missed.

The Generics Act of 1988 should seriously be implemented by the government. Moreover, the public should be well informed about the Generics Law and National Drug Use POLICY through intensive information campaigns and education drives.

There is a strong chance for the use of safe and affordable generic medicines that have gone through intensive research and testing for efficacy. The prescription of what a doctor believes is a potent drug for a certain illness and the preference for specific drugs or regimens are forms of necessary choice to heal and based on the physician's commitment to the overall well-being of his/her patient.

The insistence and prohibition of substandard drugs are a sad and undeniable reality in Philippine society. A more tragic reality is the continued failure of government's regulatory agencies—the Department of Health and the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD)—in regulating the quality and potency of essential medicines. Proof of this is the continuous proliferation of ineffective, substandard and potentially harmful drugs.

Until government clearly enforces its own regulations and clearly monitors the manufacture of essential medicines, we cannot blame thousands of doctors and patients if they continue to have preferences in their choices of which medicines to use or prescribe. This can only be done through nationalization of the drug industry, where the government can buy these essential cures the production and distribution of essential medicines by Filipinos. Only then can safe and efficacious generic medicines be accessible to millions of non-produced patients.

—RULE CAUDLE MD
speaker-poet
Community Medicine Practitioners and Advocates Association (COMPAA)
4th Floor Swiss Suites Apartment Bldg.
Remedios cor Taft Avenue, Manila

LETTERS

Obama won't have a chance in RP

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE LETTER TITLED "US President-elect hopeful is a candidate who inspires hope." (Inquirer, 02/20/08) Chairman Arroyo Fred A. Gonzalez suggests that the Philippines needs a Barack Obama. We, the Philippines needs wonder like him, but he emerges should emerge and change on the part of our electorate.

I'm also read Obama's "We Can Can, Think You" speech, and indeed he was very inspiring and convincing there. But here is our country, reality hits. Character is not enough. If we had a Barack Obama here, I doubt if he would be elected president. Just like what happened to Senator Iniego and the late Raul Roco.

Change should come not only in our politicians. The Filipino electorate should also change its attitude in choosing a leader. Voters should get choose their leaders on the basis of popularity or in the only ballot. They must take time to examine the candidates' principles and ideals.

Let's see on July 2008, we now have many presidential hopefuls. Let us not start choosing them—then serving as "somebodies" not only but our vice-president but also the top ballots.

—MARIANO LEO D. MAGAPAN
magapanmarilao@yahoo.com

CITY hall makes go through tight security check. [illegible]

Here comes too late, may arrive late again

WHEN MARILA ANNA VILLAFUERTE (Jan) threw the gates wide open, I knew that we committed a mistake. I was right. A human wave of a Mission Oriental town was murdered right under Lim's nose.

This only goes to show that, as our business center vacs per ci, Manila City Hall is a tragedy waiting to happen. He was right, his prediction has come true.

I recall that I wrote the Inquirer, after the Bacoi hostage-taking incident that security at the Manila City Hall was very lax, that it was very easy to sneak a small explosive inside. Jennifer Alonzo was then the mayor.

It had to take a murder for City Hall to act. Too late the horse, Mayor Lim.

Both he and Alonzo were hours from mistakes, instead of taking preemptive measures, they waited for a life or for admitted this a precisely what happened. But cases, not twice already.

And City Hall is most likely waiting for someone to be run over before it starts dismantling sidewalk obstructions along Lacson Street in Sampaloc, between Lacson and Don Quijote Streets.

—MARK VIAIL
mandarigi@yahoo.com

Crusade for a better youth

A CRUSADE FOR A BETTER youth of tomorrow is my advocacy as a senior citizen. We should ensure that we are raising a new breed of Filipinos for the next generation.

The crusade starts from my observation that the traditional Filipino values have greatly deteriorated. It seems that our home-centered living bear about the standards we hold and the principles by which we judge. As a result, we have suffered a breakdown in seven like love and respect for our family and our ethnic integrity, honesty, hard work and loyalty, commitment to education, belief in peace and stability, and emphasis on obligations to the community. I attribute the problems besetting the nation such as the crime wave, worsening poverty and the loss of the sense of right and wrong to a "crisis of morality."

I am a physician, a fitness, cite healer, scientist and a lecturer in both child and elderly care. I would like to stress that the family is the basic school of social values which are necessary in every society. Our children are the most important of all family values. Every tradition holds values of all that has transpired before in the family and in the world, and will participate in all that is yet to come.

Thousands of babies are born every day, but every child is unique and very special. Each one is a miracle, a mysterious, total bundle of infinite possibilities. Our family values must be imprinted on the children and if they are valued in the family, then their parents will be valued too.

The advocacy is principally focused on the formative years of the child most from the time of the child's birth up to his ninth year, he gradually acquires and develops his individual character and personality. It is during this time that values and attitudes are modeled into his tender and vulnerable mind, and these will have a lasting effect on his intellectual, social, physical and spiritual development.

As more mothers join their husbands in the work force to augment the family income, they are forced to entrust their young children to a relative or a person who can only provide custodial care, having little or no knowledge in proper child care.

As such the need to educate the children's caregivers is important. My children's handbook, "Providing Proper Care to the Preschool Child during the Rewarding Years" that became a national bestseller in 1997 provides the essentials of child-rearing: health, care, safety and education. It is principally focused on Filipino values, guided by the general principles of developmental childcare biology.

Concerned and civic-minded citizens are invited to actively participate in this crusade for a peaceful and happy life for all. For more information, please call 332-7913/4917/488-1906 or log on to www.caradelabel.wordpress.com.

—SERENA A. LAZZARI, MD.
info@caradelabel
lazzaryouth.com

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Across the NATION

NEWSBRIEFS

■ BAGUIO CITY

Dump plan loses proponent

THE CITY council is studying an offer made by Sofia Vista Bloc of Valenzuela Consolidated of Bangued to sell its land to another town where it can set up a sanitary landfill.

It closed its dump last year to comply with a national solid waste management law.

But officials now have a problem. Councilor Jaime Caoili on Friday due to a heart attack.

Doreen Cabrera
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ TALISAY, BATANGAS

164 fish cages rise in protected area

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources reported that 164 illegal fish cages had been built in the Pansipit River, a protected area, since May 26 last year.

Eduardo Principe, DENR Calabarzon director and chair of the Protected Area Management Board—executive committee, made the report in the Jan. 31 meeting of the body.

San Nicolas Mayor Eylaine Bandonill confirmed the presence of the fish cages during the meeting, but said these had no permits from the municipal government. "Since there are no permits issued, therefore they are illegal," Principe said.

Marlon Alexander Lalaine,
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ COTABATO CITY

20 families flee homes as clan clash

AT LEAST 20 families have fled their homes in the coastal village of Shariff Kabunsuan after two warring Moro groups clashed on Saturday, leaving three people dead, including a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commander, police said.

Tension ran high in the coastal village of Lagutan, Datu Blah Sinsuat, some 20 kilometers from the city, after a clash between MILF Commander Tapa Tabunawan and the rival and Commander Bong Asence of the Moro National Liberation Front.

"Houses already lined (ruins) they burned over remaining of vital trucks of land," said Capt. Dennel Ali, Shariff Kabunsuan police chief.

Edwin O. Fernandez,
Inquirer Mindanao

■ BAGUIO CITY

Reservists charged with raid on precinct

POLICE charged nine members of the Army Reserve Command with illegal possession of firearms and direct assault after a raid on a precinct in Mabalacat, Pampanga, last week.

Chief Insp. Romulo Sangalang, commander of the police precinct, said the Army reservists, armed with at 16 rifles, entered the precinct on Jan. 29 to retrieve a gun confiscated from one of their companions in Angeles City.

MSgt. Federico Cabana, the reservists' unit leader, denied the raid, saying the rifles they were carrying weren't loaded.

Omar Kristian Quintos,
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ BAGUIO CITY

1st conference on Cordillera studies

THE CORDILLERA Studies Center of the University of the Philippines Baguio will hold the 1st International Conference on Cordillera Studies on Feb. 1-3.

Held in conjunction with the celebration of the UP Centennial, the conference will address the general theme of "Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Transition."

Different perspectives in the study of indigenous society and culture will be presented.

Interested parties may contact the UP Baguio Cordillera Studies Center at 09/45-4/5-0796 or e-mail: cordi@upi.edu.ph. For conference details, log onto the conference website: www.upb.edu.ph/~cbc.

Rebs raid mayor's gold plant

TAGUM CITY—COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS stormed a gold processing plant owned by a mayor in Compostela Valley yesterday and killed two security guards, a military official said.

The attack occurred as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) stormed at a stepped-up offensive against the government and mining companies.

Lt. Col. Joaquin Santiago, commander of the Army's 72nd Infantry Battalion, said an undetermined number of New People's Army (NPA) rebels intercepted dump trucks at the gold processing plant of JR Mining in Barangay Glupcon in Monkayo town at around 8 a.m.

Senior Insp. Rodolfo Baron, Monkayo police chief, said at least seven guerrillas, including a woman, came in a female pickup during the attack.

The guerrillas opened fire at the guard house and killed two security.

Baron said another group of rebels, numbering about 20, was posted as a blocking force a few hundred meters away while the attackers took the firearms of the slain guards.

The guerrillas left the pickup and fled toward the forests of New Calape, a village in Maragusan town.

Baron said police authorities have held the driver of the vehicle, which the rebels acquired from a construction company in Davao City.

Monkayo Mayor Manuel Rellanes Jr. who owns the plant, declined to comment on military and police claims that the attackers were rebels. "We lost two blue guards. I can't comment yet on the identities of the suspects. The police are investigating", Rellanes said.

The tension turned then Rellanes was declared an enemy by the NPA because of his alleged counterrevolutionary activities.

Last year, communist guerrillas burned two of his company's dump trucks and chopped down palm trees in his plantation in Monkayo.

The military said it was tightening security in mining areas in the province following the raid.

In a recent warning, CPP spokesperson Roger Rosal said the NPA would continue to punish mining companies in the country.

Rosal also said the NPA would formally issue attacks against the government and its agents.

On Monday guerrillas killed a policeman in Compostela Valley.

PO3 Rolando Parcasio of the Compostela police was unwrapping a birthday party when he was attacked.

Above a week ago, NPA rebels also killed PO3 Rolando Guerero of Nabunturan town, also in Compostela Valley.

For this year alone, the NPA said its forces had already killed at least 46 soldiers and policemen in Southern Mindanao.

Rigoberto Sanchez, spokesperson of the NPA's Mercedes Arce Command, said in a statement that the number of slain government agents was enough proof that the military's bravado about the defeat of communist guerrillas had no basis.

"The revolutionary struggle was able to sustain its advance and maintain its political-military initiative," Sanchez said. *With reports from Maureen Arao and Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao*

SACADA
Roger plantation workers carry sugarcane to a truck at Hacienda, Barangay Sag-ang, La Castellana, Negros Occidental. [illegible]

Batangas vice gov won't back off poll case

BATANGAS CITY—VICE GOV Hermi Leviste said he would remain resilient in the ongoing electoral protest filed against him by the Commission on Elections administrator candidate Eduardo B. Ermita, son of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, Leviste said "I will not let their dirt cap not fresh off in the face of the Hacienda machinations that are being done by Mr. Ermita."

Leviste Ermita earlier told Leviste to just let the Commission on Elections decide on the protest, adding that he should just focus on the issue and stop dragging his father's name into the case.

Leviste said he was focused on his job and responsibility as the vice governor by addressing the needs of his constituents, while his lawyers were closely monitoring developments of the case.

"To course that the vice will of the people is not thwarted."

"I have kept my hands off and allowed the Commission on Elections to decide, and I submit that I pray everything that the true voice will not be altered or manipulated because the officials are intimidated by the incumbent governor of the so-called 'Little Premiers'," he said.

Leviste claimed that if he would not remain vigilant, his enemies would continue cheating him.

He denied allegations of the young Ermita that he was "urinate of photos." He said he was never "accused of hiring people with evil intentions."

Leviste won in the vice gubernatorial race in 2007 under Bangi, beating Ermita (Lakas-CMD) by close to 10,000 votes. Comelec results showed. *With Alexander Lanoso, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

PASG report: Car smuggling leads to Customs

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The smuggling of vehicles into the Philippines is given every by how things are being done at the Land Transportation Office in Toledo City, according to a study by the Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group.

"It is a business model that is representative of the growth of the car registration racket in LTO," the PASG said in a study conducted last week.

Of the 730 registration vehicles in the LTO Toledo City branch last year, 111 have Metro Manila addresses. The same registration pattern happens in other LTO branches, it said.

"In terms of revenues, the most plausible reason is that those motor vehicles have no and deny the Toledo and other LTO branches are considered 'friendly' offices which are accommodate these dirty leads," the study said.

On top of that, some data for cars registered in LTO Toledo did not match. Chassis numbers, for instance, did not correspond with the make or series of cars. The patches leads to the date of the Bureau of Customs, the study said.

This happens when the certificate of payments (CPG), which are issued by the BoC to importers, are used to cover only either the chassis or engine of a particular vehicle and not the vehicle actually registered with the LTO.

This can also happen when the CP was made to cover a motor vehicle of lower value than the one actually registered. This results in the payment of lower taxes to the BoC.

The racket might have gone so far as the LTO central office, the PASG said. One indication is the mismatch of the names of car owners registered in Toledo and the central office, it said.

Another media operatoll leaked from the data obtained is that motor vehicles which may have already been smuggled out are registered belatedly at the Toledo district office, which may account for the Manila plates having been issued on the time of their registration with the LTO," the PASG said.

In 2007, at least 302 of 730 sampled registrations had Manila license plates. According to the PASG, this "registration anomaly" happened even when the LTO database was already computerized.

The extent of the database manipulation could not be established but the PASG said even former LTO Assistant Commissioner Reynaldo Berroya, who was replaced last week, had taken note of this problem.

For instance, of the 61 cars seized in Makati City on Dec. 19 last year, 22 were found to have no record in the LTO database. 12 units carried plates illegally attached (meaning the plates were issued to other motor vehicles), and 47 were found legally registered in different LTO district offices.

"The operational word is 'legally registered.' If 22 of the motor vehicles are not in LTO database, where licenses are attached to those vehicles? If the plates attached to 12 of the vehicles belong to other vehicles, does it logically follow that those 12 vehicles are in the database and therefore legally registered?" the PASG asked.

"If the bulk of 47 motor vehicles are 'legally registered' in different LTO district offices, does it necessarily follow that those vehicles were 'legally imported?'"

> 'Legal importation is a condition sine qua non (without which, nothing) for car registration...'

The PASG reminded the LTO that "legal importation is a condition sine qua non (without which, nothing) for car registration."

Noting the "levels of corruption of both BoC and LTO," the PASG went on to reveal in its study what it called "modes of smuggling."

Misdeclaration. Motor vehicles are declared under parts or other commodities. These are heavy enough to compensate for the weight and thus avoid detection of the smuggled cars.

"Kumbod." The engine and chassis of the vehicle are declared and CPs are issued for both. Smugglers use this CPs for registration at the LTO.

Multiple use of CPs. The CP issued to a motor vehicle is used repeatedly to register other vehicles of the same kind or sometimes even other brands.

Underventilation. The engine number and chassis number of the vehicle are correctly reflected on the documents but the price is grossly underrated.

Troops sent as guards in mining area in Agusan Sur

BUTUAN CITY—RESIDENTS IN Agusan del Sur have questioned the presence of Army soldiers in a gold rush area and accused the soldiers of securing the "high-grade" mine site there to discourage the operation of mining cooperatives.

But a ranking military official, whose rank has prohibited his troops in Agusan del Sur, said the soldiers could have been part of the deployment against New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

"It could be an allegation or some propaganda of the communists because of the ongoing operations in the Agusan del Sur area," said Maj. Rodrigo Soriano, spokesperson of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command based in Davao City.

Security for miner

But miners, who did not want to be identified because of fear, said the soldiers, belonging to the 36th Infantry Battalion, were not operating against the NPA.

Some of them have been moving as part of security from her millionaire owner Jose Cayas, they said. Cayas owns mining tunnels in the gold-rich area called Bad Mountain, an upland area about 31 km from the center of Bunawan town.

The sources said a certain Sergeant Burgos had been serving as Cayas' chief of security.

Aside from providing security to Cayas and his mine tunnel, soldiers were allegedly deployed to protect his three-story building in San Francisco town and a cannon in Barangay Bayugan 1 in Bunawan.

Cayas, widely known as Pulong, is a former motorcycle driver who struck a fortune in mining.

Not a mission

One of the sources said the deployment of the soldiers was not part of their tour of duty against communist guerrillas.

"The presence of the soldiers at the mining area has instead become a threat to the livelihood of the thousands of small-scale miners, who came from different parts of Mindanao to try their luck," the source said.

Sources said he would get in touch with military commanders in the area to find out the truth in the allegations.

He said that if it turned out to be correct, the military would conduct an investigation. *Inquirer Mindanao*

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

HAVEN/BANGUIT beach in Lian town, Batangas facing the Balayan Bay, one of the rich fishing grounds of the province. (PHOTO)

War on illegal fishing: A reality check

Poverty factor or political will? Authorities differ on law enforcement

By Marlon Alexander Lalara
Batangas City

THE LAW REQUIRES LICENSES, leases or permits for the use of active fishing gear and undersized fine mesh sets, and bans commercial fishing in municipal waters, but a maritime police official admits to having a hard time enforcing it, particularly among small fishermen.

"What is needed here is food. Why we can say it is their luck (engaging in illegal fishing), it is (also) their livelihood," Maj. Antonio Malapitan, head of the Batangas Maritime Police, said in a committee hearing of the provincial board in Batangas City on Jan. 29.

The hearing was held to assess the implementation of the Philippine Fisheries Code or Republic Act No. 8550 in Batangas. It was attended by 60 people, mostly fishermen and municipal agriculturists.

"The problem with our law is that something is prohibited, but we have to think of the people affected since it's an economic problem," Malapitan said.

Political will

When asked of the ways to prevent illegal fishing activities, Rosario del Mundo, provincial fisheries officer, said in an interview on Monday that "the municipal government should have the political will to arrest their constituents who violate the law."

"What happens is when the problem arises, they usually pass it on to fisheries (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources)," she added. "But the BFAR is only for technical assistance."

Batangas has a 384-kilometer coastline covering 153 barangays in 13 municipalities and a city, according to provincial Board Member Michelle Vermudez-Ingalla. It has two major bays, Balayan and Batangas, and other water bodies, such as Tabas Bay, Pagapas Bay, Maraypin Bay, Taal Lake and Pinagbi River.

Fish caught in the Balayan Bay include scad, talakitok, tambakol, blue marlin, alumahan, sardine, galunggong (round scad) and dalagang bukid.

At least 200,000 people, representing 7.5 percent of the province's total population, depend on fisheries for livelihood, Ingalla said.

Provisions of law

The Fisheries Administrative Order 196, series of 2008, imposes license fees of P200-P2,000 on commercial fishing vessels, depending on their weight in gross tons. It charges an annual gear license fee of P200 for small-scale commercial fishing, P400 for medium scale, and P600 for large scale.

Commercial fishing is only allowed "beyond 15 kilometers from the shore" under RA 8550. "The main reason we prohibit commercial fishing inside municipal waters is that there are already limited fishes there," Del Mundo said.

Malapitan asked the provincial board to study whether some provisions of RA 8550 were "still applicable," particularly Sections 89 and 90, which prohibit the use of undersized fine mesh net and active fishing gear.

Offenders suffer from penalties, such as six months to one years imprisonment and a P2,000-P20,000 fine, depending on the court's decision.

The law also prohibits the use of fine mesh nets smaller than the standard 3 centimeters (based by the Department of Agriculture). It, however, exempts the gathering of fry, glass eels, elvers, tabios, alamang and other species, "which by their nature are small but already mature."

The latest number of arrests of violators were not immediately available. The Bantay Dagat group in Mabini town alleged that some members of the Maritime Police protect the illegal fishers. In most cases, they negotiate for the release of the fishers, it said.

Poaching

Malapitan stressed that while rich people generally owned commercial fishing boats, they employed small fishermen as workers, who shared about one-half to one kilo of fish each from a commercial boat's daily catch.

But Johnny Velasco, a Bantay Dagat member, said the fish workers in commercial boats were mostly doing "part time jobs" to earn extra money. They do not have regular salaries but only depend on the share that the boat owner would give from their fine catch, he said.

Del Mundo admitted that commercial fishers continued to poach in municipal waters. "This can further deplete the resources, especially since commercial fishing is destructive in nature. Based on their (commercial fishers') fishing gears, their method (in catch fish) is very efficient," she said.

The mismanagement has caused problems in the neighboring municipalities of Lemery, which depends on commercial fishing alone for livelihood, according to municipal agriculturist Sangie Arlanda.

Commercial fishermen are often caught poaching there as "they think it is still Lemery, but (in reality) they are already in Calatagan, San Luis or Tingloy," Arlanda said.

She appealed to the nearby towns along the Balayan Bay, which lies southwest of the province, to allow the commercial fishers of Lemery to enter their areas "(provided the overall) fish supply won't suffer."

Of the 11 municipalities facing the bay, however, only Calatagan was able to "delineate its municipal waters" through the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority as required by RA 8550, Del Mundo has learned.

The way to resolve fishery concerns in Balayan Bay, Del Mundo said, was for the province to create a "management group" that would oversee all the fishing activities.

5 more kilometers

Some participants in the hearing lobbied to add five more kilometers for commercial fishing in the bay, but the small fishers of Balayan and Calatagan towns disagreed. This would further put Balayan's small fishers "very behind," Filomeno Gadon, president of the Samahan Balayan (Ang Nagkakaisang Mamamayang Kasad ng Balayan) said in a phone interview on Thursday.

With advanced technology, commercial fishing boats can catch 5-10 tons daily compared to a small fisher's hauls of only 5-10 kilos, using gill nets.

Rogerio Rosario, an officer of the Samahan ng Maliliit na Mangingisda sa Calatagan, supported Gadon's stand, saying the entry of commercial fishers to his town would only worsen the problem of overfishing.

"They can catch within one day the fish that we would catch in up to three to five months, and the fish are even in bulk," Alcoran said. When this happens, poverty in the coastline could worsen, he said.

"We're only enforcing the law. RA 8550 says it clear. Commercial fishing is only allowed beyond 15 kilometers (from the shore)," Jesus de los Reyes, chair of the Calatagan Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council, said in an interview.

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BATANGAS FISHING TOWNS

CARP falls short of target in Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—At least 23,873 hectares of farmland remain underutilized in seven Central Luzon provinces as the 10-year extension of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) drises to a close in June.

The regional Department of Agrarian Reform managed to enforce the CARP in only 5,419 ha in 2007, reports obtained by the Inquirer showed. It exceeded last year's target by 419 ha.

The new CARP is he went to cover 230 ha in Aurora, 622 ha in Bataan, 472 ha in Bulacan, 772 ha in northern Nueva Ecija, 1,023 ha in southern Nueva Ecija, 1,265 ha in Pampanga, 834 ha in Tarlac and 594 ha in Zambales.

The reports did not state the number of farmer beneficiaries or the sizes of areas they got.

Even as the CARP had distributed 413,582 ha to agrarian reformers, Central Luzon since the start of its implementation in 1988, it is bound to end with more targets of some 20,000 ha.

Of the balance comprising 30,375 ha of "problematic" landholdings and 13,498 ha of "workable" lands, only 5,300 ha remained undistributed this year to contributors to the national target of 150,000 ha, Teofilo Guarducia, agrarian reform regional director, said.

"We need really to ask for an extension of the CARP. We can publish of our resources in both ways," Guarducia said.

Right bills seeking to give the CARP a second extension are pending in Congress. Legislators have proposed three, five or 10 years more for the supposed social justice program begun during the Aquino administration.

Most proponents want to strengthen support services to farmers, Guarducia said.

Groups of militant farmers disagrees with what they called the "pro-landlord" CARP's are clamoring for a radical program targeting large landholdings, strict safeguards against land use conversion, and bigger funds for support services.

In the report, the DAR was grappling with opposition to its plan to settle 10,375 ha of "problematic" landholdings or areas with mining rights, technical deficiencies, court disputes or protests against CARP coverage. Some of these areas have been surveyed for central tilling, Guarducia said.

Of the workable balance of 13,498 ha, the DAR will have to look for lands to acquire from from private landowners, he said.

In 2007, the regional DAR focused on organizing 361 agrarian reform communities. These covered only 120,842 ha of 302,018 CARP beneficiaries, another report showed.

Rainelle Dimlan, Inquirer Central Luzon

IF A BAN on public utility vehicles is enforced, PUVs may be barred from using the controversial Bagac-Tipo' Bataan Road and Marcos Highway

China training for RP farmers sought

By Dennis Cruz
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—LEARN FROM China.

This was the advice of a Philippine-China solidarity group to Benguet's vegetable farmers if they wanted to improve their farming techniques to be able to compete in the global market.

"If you compare the vegetables from China and the ones we produce in the Philippines, the ones from China are bigger, greener and packaged well. Primary Chinese farmers do not use fertilizers but they produce as much and we want to find out how they do it without using fertilizers," said Sr. Charlie Chong, a Chinese member of the Association for Philippine-China Understanding.

Chinese farmers are sufficient at fertilizers, but the Benguet farmers want to know if this is indeed effective in improving their vegetable production, Chong said.

Vegetables produced in China, such as pechay, carrots, cabbage and potato, have continued to enter the country and have competed with locally grown vegetables.

Chong and his group had asked the provincial government to help it send at least 10 farmers to China to learn new vegetable farming technology. He said the cost of transportation and other expenses had discouraged them from proceeding the study tour.

The Chinese Filipino community wants the local farmers to improve their production since it was the Chinese migrants who introduced farming to Benguet to vegetable planting in the early 1900s, he said.

According to the book, "The Ethnic Chinese in Baguio and in the Cordillera Philippines," authored by Chong and Katherine Bersamin, the Chinese pioneers brought agricultural practices to highland farming, such as composting, recycling of organic matter, crop rotation and border usage, proper tillage of soil, irrigation and natural pest control.

The Chinese farmers also introduced several varieties of vegetables, such as cabbage, pechay, broccoli, lettuce, kangkong, celery and carrots, and ornamental plants to upland farmlands.

A farmers' group in the Cordillera has also looked into foreign practices to improve the local farmers' yield.

Fernando Bugnos, executive member of Ayta Tabo, said a network with farmers' groups in Cuba was being formed so it could learn from their land reform program and farming techniques.

"The farms here become very self-sufficient and really address the food security of the people. We want to learn about their organic pesticide so farmers here will not use chemicals anymore," Bugnos said.

DPWH, DOTC clash for turf over Kennon Road control

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE DEPARTment of Public Works and Highways and the Department of Transportation and Communication in the Cordillera are expected to clash some over which of them has the authority to declare Kennon Road unsafe for public transport.

DPWH officials used the provincial boards session here on Monday to install a memorandum circular issued by lawyer Roderico Mandapat Jr., DOTC regional director, which banned public utility vehicles from passing through Kennon.

Allies

The DPWH found an ally in board members who agreed to pass one week a resolution asking Mandapat to recall his memorandum that took effect on Sept. 1 last year.

Bagiuo Subhan, chief of the Baguio-Benguet District, said road sections, said the authority to give traffic advisory on the road's safety remained with the DPWH, not the DOTC.

Subhan reminded Mandapat that Marcos Bugnos, DPWH regional director, never like her was questioning the circular.

Discrimination

Mandapat Sept. 7 letter said the DPWH is the proper authority to give a traffic advisory on road safety, adding that Mandapat's circular is discriminatory as it only sought to prohibit transportation PUVs.

In the circular, Mandapat said all public utility vehicles must travel through Marcos Highway and avoid Kennon because of the road's unsafe condition.

But Subhan said Mandapat's circular was ill-advised since other government agencies were not consulted before it was issued.

Caught in the turf war between DPWH and the DOTC is the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, whose study showed Kennon's instability. Mandapat based his circular on the MGB findings.

Gen. April, MGB geologist, told the board that based on a 2006 geohazard mapping, a stretch of Kennon from Baguio to Camp 6 in Tuba, Benguet, was 85 percent "highly susceptible to landslides."

> "Caught in the turf war between the DPWH and the DOTC is the Mines and Geosciences Bureau ... '

This is due to the loose nature of the bedrock and slopes of the road that make them prone to landslides, especially during rainy season, she said.

But Alexander Cruzmenda, Benguet district engineer, said the MGB failed to coordinate with the DPWH in coming up with the geohazard map.

The DPWH, he said, has been working to reduce the danger zones along Kennon.

Inconvenience

Board Members Rogelio Lazo and Jose Navarro Jr. said Mandapat should recall the circular that had inconvenienced a lot of Tuba residents and commuters.

Mandapat earlier told the board that President Macapagal-Arroyo issued a directive, in September last year that transferred the functions of a multisectoral agency on road safety to the DOTC. But Subhan said the DPWH has not received such directive.

Subhan said the DPWH was still the lead agency tasked with declaring whether Kennon was fit for public transport. Delmar Cardiño, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Steel firm's case cited as sample of abuse

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN LIKE asked the Senate to review abuses in corporate bailouts as part of its inquiry into the rescue of business laws to avoid a repeat of the experience of a troubled steel company in Batangas.

In a letter to Senator Juan Ponce Enrile and Edgardo Angara, Jesus Arteaga, head of the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI), said the experiences of Steel Corp. of the Phils. (Steelcorp), a member of the FPI, showed how corporate bailouts could be abused.

The Steelcorp experience, said Arteaga's letter, could provide inputs that would plug loopholes in "business laws and processes," "predatory" groups and creditors from abusing distressed firms.

"Steelcorp's traumatic experience ... is indeed useful reference in the current deliberations on the amendments to the Corporate Recovery and Bankruptcy Act," said Arteaga.

He said Steelcorp's experience showed that loopholes in the law could be "misused and abused by unscrupulous creditors especially in cahoots with commercial courts."

Steelcorp, he said, was forced to pay two rehabilitation courts if it was able to subjunctively pay to interest payments and file a profit in 2006.

Arteaga said Steelcorp's financial troubles could have been easily solved with a "formally restructuring" of debts while ensuring that it continued to operations without any interference.

Leftist solons seek probe of farmer leader's arrest

By Jerry A. Galarito
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—MILITANT LAWMAKERS have asked for an investigation of the arrest and detention of a peasant leader facing a multiple murder case in Leyte.

The resolution, authored by Representatives Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna, Liza Maza and Lawmakers Bagsan of Gabriela, and Crispin Beltran of Anakpawis, also asked for the immediate release of Randall Echanis, 66, deputy secretary general for external affairs of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

Echanis has been detained at the provincial jail in Palo center in Leyte since Jan. 30. Beltran, together with Casiño, visited Echanis in Palo.

Beltran said the congressmen decided to endorse House Resolution No. 633 because Echanis' arrest was baseless and part of the military's effort to "neutralize" those it deemed enemies of the state.

"There was no evidence presented showing that he (Echanis) was involved in the mass murder in Leyte," Beltran said in an interview hours after he visited Echanis. He said the evidence presented by the military were just "manufactured."

The military has claimed that Echanis, along with his co-accused, was involved in the deaths of New People's Army members during a counter-insurgency in Leyte in 1987. It alleged that the skeletal remains found last year in a mass grave in Mt. Sapang Dalas, Inopacan, Leyte, were those of the purge victims.

Echanis was arrested in Baguio City on Jan. 30 on a warrant issued by Judge Ignacio Abando, presiding judge of Regional Trial Court Branch 17 in Hilongos.

Echanis' lawyer, Julieta Sibulga, said his client did not pursue the motion for bail but sent seeking a reconsideration of the case during the hearing on Tuesday at the sala of Judge Abando.

SPORTS

Realtors, Giants grab 3-2 lead

[illegible]

By Manny B. Castillo

THE ASIMOSOFT METROS DIA-chan to the Ma. Lazio-Abella series has ended, thanks to a brilliant job by Ronel Fernandez which left Yun Cazoo no other choice but to praise his opponent to high heavens.

Ma. Lazio blew a 17-point third quarter lead and had to bleed in the stretch to pound out a 95-90 victory over Manila for a 3-2 series lead in their Smart PBA Philippine Cup semifinal duel last night at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao.

In the second game, Parañaque also took a 3-2 series lead by nipping Red Bull, 96-95.

Cozoo, who had given Fernandez the cold shoulder in the last three games, knew none to endeavor to shake his conqueror's hand and give him a warm and sincere embrace.

"I wanted to hold of a game and did not lose his composure. He deserved to win this ballgame," Cozoo said in reference to reference to Fernandez' even as he took produces at the offensive end that has been very inconsistent in the series.

"We broke down. It came down to the (Alaska) team was executing well."

The Realtors refused to buckle down after the Aces had erased a 64-57 deficit to even lead with 6:11 in the fourth period, getting key help from their much-maligned veterans, who rose to the challenge in the crunch.

Dante Mendoza finished with 19 points, including clutch points in the fourth period, to lead the Realtors.

[illegible]

New San Jose Builders, Inc., Premium Projects
Ties up with Metrobank & LBC Development Bank
"New partnership makes owning a home easier"

Being one of the country's leading developers, the New San Jose Builders Inc. (NSBI) paves the way with affordable dwelling options for Filipinos in the country and around the globe like Victoria Towers, Victoria Station, Victoria de Manila and Fort Victoria. In line with its thrust to continue to provide quality high-rise condominiums that are in prime locations, it also continues to look for ways to making owning a home easier and more convenient. It has come up with a website as well as a customer service hotline to allow clients and prospective buyers to access valuable and up-to-date information anytime and anywhere in the world. The company is also set to create satellite offices outside the country. It has also tied up with a number of banks for a faster, safer and more convenient manner of paying for one's dream home. Most recently, NSBI partnered with one of the country's trusted banks — Metropolitan Bank & Trust Company (Metrobank) & LBC Development Bank.

Present during the Metrobank MOA signing were Metrobank's Senior Vice President Rowena Olivares and Manager Ma. Cristina Velasco representing NSBI as its President, Rey L. Vergara and First Vice President for International Sales & Marketing Ma. Crista Bonifacio Lim. The signing took place last October 8, 2007 at the Mayo Room at the Metro Bank Plaza Makati City, Philippines.

And also present during the LBC Development Bank MOA signing were LBC Bank's Chairperson, President & CEO Ma. Elisa G. Hermogenes and Assistant Vice President - Credit Department Remelita T. Hermogenes. NSBI represented by its Vice President for Sales & Marketing Ching Lim and Senior Sales Director Tiernimon Paris, Jr. The signing took place last December 20, 2007 at the Function Room at the Renaissance Hotel Makati City, Philippines.

Metrobank is the country's largest bank in assets and has recently bagged the 2007 Reader's Digest Trusted Brand Gold award and was honorably mentioned in The 2007 Asiamoney Awards for Best in Corporate Governance. It is the nation's strongest banking institution and has one of the largest networks in terms of banking facilities and payment systems. It offers good rates, convenient locations and very reasonable charges that make its financial products comparable with other banks. Its presence and affiliates in the country and around the world make it very accessible and convenient.

LBC Development Bank is a member of the Megalink ATM network, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Philippine Clearing House Corporation and the Bankers Institute of the Philippines. It has a solid reputation as one of the country's most reliable brands, recognized as a "Superbrand" by the Superbrands Philippines Council, as Top Development Bank by the National Consumer Affairs Foundation and as the Most Outstanding Development Bank by the Philippine Marketing Excellence Awards Institute. More recently, it became a finalist in the Best Practices award for Access to Finance by DTI and the Small & Medium Enterprises Development Council. "These partnerships will make it easier for our clients to pay for their chosen property anywhere they are," shares Bonifacio Lim.

ALASKA'S Jeffrey Cariaso (right) blocks Ma. Lazio's Dennis Espino during Game 5 of their PBA semifinal series last night at the Araneta Coliseum. The Realtors lead, 3-2.

Tigresses dump La Salle spikers; Lady Eagles win

DEFENDING CHAMPION UP-version of Sarina Tomas seemed a sluggish start in over-power De La Salle, 25-21, 23-25, 25-13, 25-17, and move closer to a series-in-four home-and-away sweep in the UAAP women's volleyball tournament yesterday at the Blue Eagle Gym.

In the other game, Ateneo bounced back from a six-point third set deficit to stop also-ran University of the Philippines, 25-10, 25-21, 27-25.

The win enabled the Lady Eagles to momentarily overtake unbeaten Lady Archers for fourth place, 7-4 to 6-7.

The Tigresses passed their night in the third set with last season's Most Valuable Player Alyssa Brewer, Shaq Jean Soler and Jerpel Sibayan scoring almost at will.

Soler blocked Michelle Datuin to clinch UST's 15th win in 15 matches, half a game ahead of first-ranked Far Eastern University which dropped to third place at 19-2.

Ateneo University still leads with an 11-1 slate.

The Tigresses and the Lady Eagles will rematch on Sunday at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Ateneo, which won its second straight match, boosted its bid for a first-ever semifinal appearance since joining the league in 1978.

The win did not come easy though as the Lady Maroons almost forced a fourth set when they won up, 23-17, after weaker Lady Eagle Kara Acevedo's shot went outside.

The Lady Eagles, however, managed to claw back, with reserve Bianca Gaza scoring the game-tying kill, 24-all.

UP took the lead seven, 25-24, courtesy of a down-the-line hit by Julina Fernandez but Chan Sarmiento and Patti Tagaino responded with back-to-back smashes to give Ateneo a 26-25 lead.

A filing violation by UP setter Carmela Lopez sealed Ateneo's victory.

The 22-year old Sotiana bumped a game-high 17 points.

Aplus METRO
Website: www.inquirer.net/metro
Editor Ernie G. Dipasupil
Metro Desk Hotline: [illegible] E-mail: [illegible]

DID YOU KNOW

[illegible] the 1988 mass presidential election, 10 percent of Metro Manila voters (about 400,000 voters) were reportedly disenfranchised due to massive poll irregularities. Then President Corazon C. Aquino called for the mass election to be delayed but we feel he still had the people's mandate. Do you feel you deserved redress, leading to public protests?

Ephi C. Bonifacio, Inquirer Research

GETTING READY
A man polishes a Buddha statue in a Chinese temple in Binondo, Manila, on the eve of the Chinese New Year. [illegible]

6 babies leave hospital after habeas petition OKd

Infants allegedly detained for unpaid bills

By Allison W. Lopez

MONTHS AFTER THEIR BIRTH, SIX BABIES were released from a Manila hospital after a judge the other day granted their parents' petition for a writ of habeas corpus.

The babies—six boys aged from 2 to 9 months—were reportedly "illegally detained" at the Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center on Muñoz Street, Manila, after their parents failed to settle their bills with the facility.

On Tuesday, the infants were finally turned over to their parents after Judge Carlito Modena Galula of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 29 granted the petition for a writ of habeas corpus filed by couples Alan and Cecilina Sia, Chen, Leonardo and Cecelina Bingpio, Jimmy Roy and Anna Grace Santiago, Dante and Bernadette Dy, Elton Atlas and Jeannine Pineda, and Evangeline Perez.

The petitioners had given birth to their babies in the hospital.

In her decision, the judge said the babies were "constructively being deprived of the opportunity of being reared by their parents ... without due process of law."

Immediately after Galula handed down her ruling, a Manila sheriff and members of the District Special Project Unit furnished hospital officials with a copy of her decision, paving the way for the babies' release.

The writ of habeas corpus requires respondents to produce in court the subject of the petition so the judge can determine whether the subject is being held lawfully.

It has often been used for alleged victims of enforced disappearances like activist Jonas Burgos.

The Public Attorney's Office, led by chief public attorney Persida Rueda-Acosta who represented the petitioners, said the babies were cared for in the hospital in "isolated" so-called their parents to settle their bills with the facility.

The parents vowed to pay monthly amounts ranging from P500 to P1,000 until they finally paying off their medical bills.

The lawyers reportedly sought a court mandate from the Commission on Human Rights, but the agency said it was "in a biased manner."

Army men, elite PNP unit sent to Quezon City for anticrime drive

By Marlon Ramos

DON'T BE ALARMED IF YOU see men in full battle gear and armed-to-the-teeth policemen patrolling the busy streets of Quezon City one of these days.

To put a stop to the spring of robberies one after the other in the city in the past few weeks (more than 150 robberies and [illegible]) were deployed yesterday to the different police stations in the area.

According to Senior Supt. Magtagna Dedalada, Quezon City Police District chief, the deployment of 100 Armed Forces of the Philippines personnel was part of an ongoing program settlement with Brig. Gen. Fernando Mesa, AFP Habitual Capital Region Command chief.

Augmenting the soldiers' ranks were 119 members of the Regional Special Action Unit of the Philippine National Police.

Dedalada said soldiers were set to deployed in Quezon City at the start of the holiday season.

"We pulled out the troops as the peace and order situation in Quezon City stabilized in December. But after what happened in the last few days, we have to increase troop visibility again," he told the Inquirer.

On Tuesday, a group of armed men robbed an unused vacuum cleaner store in Project 8, Quezon City. One of the gunmen shot a security guard who tried to stop one of the 15 men who pulled the heist.

Several hours later, another group of men cleaned the Union Bank branch on Timog Avenue, Quezon City (along the road) inside the school dormitory. Five people standing outside the bank were had when the robbers fired at the glass doors of the establishment and adjacent shops so they were making their escape.

Tear up

Dedalada said two soldiers would team up with two policemen in patrolling commercial districts and other crowded places in Quezon City.

He added that they initially plan to use the security assignment for at least a month.

Dedalada acknowledged that they did not have enough men and the necessary firepower to battle "high-profile criminals."

He added that while the PNP had said that the ideal ratio should be one policemen for every 500 residents or a total of 2,750 policemen.

E-court project makes debut in Marikina City court rooms

By Kristine L. Alave

THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF MARIKINA yesterday started its electronic court (e-court) project to facilitate and enhance court transactions and services.

Mayor Marides Fernando said the program would reduce the delays in court proceedings and overcome, to nothing, both the public and the city government's role players.

The project was initiated by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. through a P5 million allotment from the Priority Development Assistance Fund.

The allotment covers the computerization of eight regional courts and two municipal trial courts in the city.

It would also help set up a court database to allow better connectivity in the judiciary's administrative processes.

The project aims to connect local courts to the Supreme Court so both sides can efficiently monitor decisions, statements and case loads, Fernando added.

It would also pay for a closed-circuit video system that allows a child witness to testify outside the courtroom.

Lawyer Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, a son of the senator who intended the project launch, said computerization would play a major role in reducing delays in court proceedings.

He expressed hope that it would soon resolve case the paperless filing of pleadings and sharing of court information.

Aside from providing a database, the e-court project also calls for the installation of a computer-aided transcription machine that allows transcripts of stenographic notes to be printed and distributed right after a hearing.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Mayor, hotel trade barbs on conduct

By Nancy C. Carvajal

OLONGAPO CITY, MAYOR Marvel Gordolfino yesterday called for a boycott of a resort in Barangay Ito after he called its food service and discourtesy and unprofessional staff.

He added that he would file a complaint in the Department of Tourism against the managers and staff of the restaurant at Discovery Shores Resort resort.

"Gordon I am not being rattled by demanding, a public apology, in no uncertain terms, from the management of Discovery Shores Hotel Resort for the humiliation, discrimination and insulting attitude we experienced and to demand that the restaurant manager, Cesar Fernandez, and other personnel be reprimanded for their unjustified acts," Gordolfino said.

According to the mayor, at around 9 p.m. on Dec. 30, he and his six companions arrived at the resort's restaurant to have dinner.

Gordolfino said the reception at immediately told him that they would not be accommodated because there was no available table. At that time, however, the manager claimed there was an empty table near them with a "reserved" sign on it. Several of his friends who were eating in the restaurant at that time offered him their table because they were about to leave, he added.

However, he claimed the restaurant still turned them away, saying the restaurant was closing in an hour.

After introducing himself, Gordolfino said he asked the receptionist to call Fernandez, the restaurant manager. Fernandez told him that they did not accept customers of the hotel at the resort, he said. He said, Gordolfino told the man his friend who had just left the restaurant was not staying at the hotel either.

Concerned his companion, Ken Pineda, the resort's general manager, denied Gordolfino's allegations that he was treated rudely by the restaurant management and staff.

He added that it was the other way around with the mayor even cursing the employees.

Pineda said Gordolfino was turned away because he and his companions arrived just a few minutes before closing time.

Foot patrol teams in Las Piñas

By Ed Tup

LAS PIÑAS CITY MAYOR Vergel "Noyo" Aguilar yesterday directed the local police to deploy more foot patrol teams around the city, believing the discovery of two bullet-riddled bodies believed to be victims of summary execution last week.

The mayor ordered the city police chief, Supt. Armando Espino, to reinforce police checkpoints in 20 barangays to prevent crimes in his city, which he described as safer than its other cities powerful place.

On Jan. 30, a security guard was on his way to work when he stumbled on the bodies on the pavement of Brahman Street near a bypass at BF International subdivision, police said.

The victims were later identified as Ricardo Pacle, 23, and Oliver Lacuna, 20, both of Talisay, who allegedly had a history of criminal activity in the area, said Senior Insp. Ana Dale Sulla.

"Based on arrest statistics, it appears Pacle was often identified by complainants in 'Most Below' Brangay's cases," Sulla said. "Lacuna was said to be his companion," Sulla added. It was possible the victims were killed elsewhere and their bodies dumped in Las Piñas.

Anarchy in the streets

ON TARGET
Rosvan Tuffy

HE STOOD BY PRESIDENT ARROYO in her darkest hour—at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal when she was in danger of losing the presidency.

He got her in his cunning mode in the 1998 presidential election when she was elected vice president and he was transported by cardiac.

Now, retired Speaker Jose de Venecia finds himself in the position where he propped up to the position where the incumbent

Congressman De Venecia, you can take comfort in the fact that even de Venecia had Judas.

* * *

AIV's successor, Prospero "Boy" Nograles, is considered in enemy of media for sending to jail his wife radio Alex Adasa.

Adasa, former commentator of the Tarzan Radyo in Davao City, gave Nograles the moniker "Bucket King."

If De Venecia was called "Ice de Bolo," for his unbridled promises, Nograles earn the down the "Bucket King" tag.

* * *

Now that he's more powerful than before, the Davao mayor no more wary of Nograles than ever.

Doing the rounds?

There is anarchy in the streets because there are no cops.

* * *

I'm reminded of a cop who was home but didn't respond to an alarm even when a crime near his house was being robbed.

His comment when he was asked why he evaded his duty: "Sir, ano bah? Pwede ko pa ba kunin ito, o hindi?"

That's the mentality of a typical policeman in Metro Manila.

* * *

A police official, Supt. Aaron Francisco Sicile of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) was convicted by a Quezon City regional trial court for using a unscrewed stolen vehicle on his service car.

If they don't use stolen cars, they rob them of parts like hub caps, tires and radios.

If you go to a police impounding area you'll realize that many recovered vehicles have been "cannibalized."

QC is richer by ₱7B, says treasurer

By Jeannette I. Andrade

QUEZON CITY'S SEEMINGLY FRIENDLY and propriety system of taxation has hiked up the locality's cash on hand to close to ₱7 billion for the first month of the year.

According to Quezon City treasurer Glenn Rodriguez, the city's savings has reached ₱6,904,019,181.40 by the close of Jan. 31 banking hours after it collected a gross haul of ₱2.2 billion tax and fee collections in January, an increase of 979 million compared to last year's figures for the same period.

Rodriguez attributed the rise in revenue to the "adoption of hassle-free tax collection and payment schemes" introduced by Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. in the city where city hall opened its doors even on weekends and effectively eliminated instances of corruption where there are corruption-ridden tax collectors.

The city treasurer claimed he used a hands-on approach during the tax payment period and scrutinized the documents to prevent tax cheating.

"An economic breakdown due to tax collection deficiency manifests their up our revenue structures and financial systems," Rodriguez explained, adding that guarding against tax cheats ensures the delivery by the city government of basic services to its constituents.

For the first months of 2008, the collection of business taxes followed an all-time high of ₱1.366 billion against last year's figures of ₱1.199 billion.

The collection of community tax so was pegged at ₱51.184 million compared to last year's ₱45.928 million while locally sourced revenues, including regulatory fees, miscellaneous fees, amusement taxes and transfer taxes totaled ₱1.829 billion as against to last year's ₱1.720 billion.

MetroBriefs

Robbers strike anew in QC

Days after the police vowed to put a stop to the series of robberies in Quezon City a man with a gun held up a sales agent of a cigarette company and made off with his cash collection in Barangay Pahlo yesterday. Alvin Cruz, 32, a salesman of Metrobac Trading Fortune Tobacco Corp., was busy counting his collection of ₱10,000 in front of a store at the corner of Dalhousie Street and Hipolito Street at around 3 p.m. when the self-confessed robber approached him behind and ordered him to give him the money at gunpoint. According to the report of the Quezon City Police District Station 2, the armed man furtively boarded a parked motorcycle driven by another man and sped home (Barangay Pahlo, DCPD Station 2 reportedly failed to arrest the robber despite the setting up of checkpoints in the area for violent incidents during the day. The city already arrested two clerks, police and military uniforms, robbed a bank and a super market in Quezon City. The late robberies prompted high ranking officials of the Philippine National Police to deploy military and military units to beef up the troops against criminal elements in the area.

Marlon Ramos

Unauthorized software seized

AGENTS of the National Bureau of Investigation have seized P28.5 million worth of computers allegedly containing unauthorized software during a raid on an engineering company here in Pasig City. The firm was identified as the Mount System Engineering Philippines Corporation, Cruz Systems Engineering, with offices at the Rosa Building on Kandilan Lane corner Shaw Boulevard. NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division chief Efren Blanares said the raid was conducted based on complaints filed by Microsoft Corp., Autodesk Inc. and Tekla Corp. Authorities search warrants issued by Manila Regional Trial Court Executive Judge Fernando Poe. NBI agents seized the equipment and confiscated 120 personal computers with unlicensed Microsoft, Autodesk and Tekla software and 170 pirated CD-R copies. Charges are being readied against the owners of the company, the NBI said.

David Santos

Report bares fresh al-Qaida threat to attack US

WASHINGTON—THE US INTELLIGENCE community moved on Tuesday of the threat of terrorist attack against the United States as al-Qaida improves its ability to identify, train and position operatives for such operations.

In an annual threat assessment, US intelligence reported that it had detected an influx of new western recruits to al-Qaida safe havens in Pakistan's federally administered tribal areas since 2006.

"Al-Qaida is improving the key aspect of its ability to attack the US—the identification, training, and positioning of operatives for an attack in the Homeland," the report said.

"We assess that al-Qaida's Homeland planning is likely to continue to focus on prominent political, economic, and infrastructure targets designed to produce mass casualties, visually dramatic destruction, significant economic aftershocks, and/or fear among the population," it said.

US intelligence chief Mike McConnell, who delivered the report to Congress, said US intelligence also saw threats to the United States emanating from al-Qaida-backed Sunni Islamic insurgents not motivated by military Islamic ideology.

But al-Qaida's central leadership, based in the border areas of Pakistan, "is its most dangerous component," his report said.

It noted that in July the intelligence community warned that al-Qaida's leadership has over the past two years been able "to rebuild its capabilities to conduct attacks in the Homeland."

It is using safe havens in the tribal areas "as a staging area for training new terrorist operatives, for attacks in Pakistan, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the United States," the report said.

A cadre of skilled lieutenants operating from the tribal areas are capable of directing operations around the world, it said.

"Al-Qaida's top leaders Osama bin Laden and deputy al-Zawahiri continue to be able to maintain al-Qaida unity and its focus on their strategic vision of authoritarian rule throughout the globe," it said.

Although not involved in day-to-day operations, Bin Ladin and Zawahiri regularly pass inspirational messages and specific operational guidance to their followers through public statements, the assessment said.

McConnell said al-Qaida in Iraq has suffered major setbacks at the hands of US forces, but remains al-Qaida's most capable affiliate.

"I am increasingly concerned that as we inflict significant damage on al-Qaida in Iraq, it may shift resources to mounting more attacks outside of Iraq," he said.

Captured documents suggest that fewer than 100 AQI militants have moved from Iraq to establish cells in other countries, he said.

"It will probably continue to devote some effort towards boosting Bin Ladin's support in 2008 that AQI emerged to strike the Sunni Iraqis, affiliated publicly by current AQI leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri in a November 2006 threat against the White House," McConnell said.

The admiral also expressed concerns about other al-Qaida affiliates in northern Africa and Lebanon.

Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, the most active group in northwestern Africa, "represents a significant threat to US and European interests in the region," he said in the report.

"Over the next year, attacks by 'homegrown' extremists inspired by military Islamic ideology but without operational direction from al-Qaida will remain a threat to the United States or against US interests overseas," he said. AFP

A HANDOUT image obtained in London on Feb. 5, shows an artist's impression of the A2 aircraft. The hypersonic jet can travel five times the speed of sound. —

SIX TIMES THE SPEED OF SOUND

British-designed jet can reach Australia in under five hours

LONDON—BRITISH ENGINEERS recently unveiled plans on Tuesday for a hypersonic jet which could fly from Europe to Australia in less than five hours.

The A2 plane, designed by engineering company Reaction Engines based in Oxfordshire, northern England, would carry 300 passengers at a top speed of almost 6,200 kilometers per hour, five times the speed of sound.

The LAPCAT (Long Term Advanced Propulsion Concepts and Technologies) project, backed by the European Space Agency, could see the plane operating within 20 years, the firm's boss Alan Bond told the Guardian daily.

"The A2 is designed to leave Brussels international airport, fly quietly and subsonically over into the north Atlantic at mach 0.8 before touching mach 5 across the North Pole and landing over the Pacific to Australia," he said.

The plane, which at 145 meters (469 feet) long would be about twice the size of the biggest current jets, could fly non-stop for up to 20,000 kilometers.

It operates on liquid hydrogen, which is more ecologically friendly as it gives off water and nitrogen oxide instead of carbon monoxide.

Passengers would have to put up with having no windows, due to problems with heat produced at high speeds. Instead designers may put flat screen television where the windows would be, giving the impression of seeing outside.

Bond would be comparable with current first class tickets on standard flights, of around 3,000 pounds ($6,000).

The flight time from Brussels to Australia would be four hours and 40 minutes. "It sounds incredible by today's standards but I don't see why future generations can't make day trips to Australia," he said.

"Our work shows that it is possible technically; now it's up to the world in decade if it wants it." AFP

Severe weather spoils Chinese New Year

BEIJING—MILLIONS OF CHINESE ended homes on Wednesday as they left their families on Lunar New Year's Eve but for many there would be little to celebrate after the worst weather in in 100 years to plague.

On the last day of the Year of the Pig, one of the biggest mass movements of people anywhere in the world was taking place along rail and road links newly secured for urban is the biggest holiday in the Chinese calendar.

But those who had not managed to get a ticket home were resigned to spending the holiday away from loved ones as the world's most populous nation welcomed the Year of the Rat, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

"Millions of Chinese had to say 'sorry' to their loved ones," the agency said.

The reason was three weeks of severe winter weather hitting some parts of China with the most prolonged and disruptive snowstorms in decades, seemingly sending the government unprepared and even surprising state meteorologists.

The bad weather came at the worst possible time for the transport system, ahead of the New Year's rush when 200 million migrant workers were trying to get home for what is a rare time in country is a life of often hard toil.

Officials had been struggling to get trains and buses running again, and while most key transport networks reopened this week, the backlog of passengers that had built up meant not all could get the tickets they wanted.

In the northern province of Guangdong, where plants and manufacturers employ up to 30 million migrants from all corners of China, so many no-12 million had decided to stay in their dormitories, breaking for a Monk Lunar New Year.

This was repeated elsewhere up the east coast where wealthy cities employs people from poorer parts of China. In Shanghai, 120,000 migrant workers had boycotted official calls to stay put, according to Xinhua.

The weather also made this one of the most vulnerable—and constant—Lunar New Year's in memory by disrupting power supplies, causing millions to face a festival season with little or no access to electricity and water.

Power for war Chaozhou, a city of about four million located in central China's Hunan province, which had suffered power blackouts and water cutoffs for 12 consecutive days.

Thousands of soldiers and military were commandeered to work on restoring electricity to the city and reported progress early Wednesday.

"Parts of the power lines have been restored, and power supply will return gradually for citizens in Chaozhou starting today," Huang Qiang, a Hunan electricity official, told Xinhua.

But at least eight counties in southern and eastern China were expected to be without power when dark settled on the last day of the lunar year, Xinhua said, citing the State Council, or Cabinet.

"Relief work has come to a critical point. We should not be slack, but keep pushing it forward," Premier Wen Jiabao said Tuesday, as he toured southern China's Guizhou province, one of the affected areas.

"Only when the season are assured, can the country be in peace. Only when the country is in peace, can the harbor be refloated," Wen was quoted as saying. AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

28 killed in Somali port blast

BOSASSO, SOMALIA—40 explosions killed at least 20 people and wounded a hundred more on Tuesday in a northern Somali port where Somali and Ethiopian immigrants begin the dangerous crossing to Yemen, a regional official said. "A big explosion killed more than 20 people and wounded at least a hundred tonight," Bari regional governor Mohamed Yusuf said Reuters. "Most dead bodies are still being brought to Bosasso hospital. We do not know the cause but police are investigating," he said. Most of the wounded were Ethiopian refugees. Reuters

Italy heads towards fresh elections

ROME—Italian President Giorgio Napolitano was set to dissolve parliament on Wednesday, paving the way for early elections and a probable return to power by conservative media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. Napolitano met Tuesday morning with both speakers of parliament, the prelude to dissolving parliament. Neither Senate Speaker Franco Marini nor his lower House counterpart Fausto Bertinotti spoke to the media afterward. But the ANSA news agency reported that center-left leader Romano Prodi, who resigned as prime minister two weeks ago, would co-sign a decree dissolving parliament on Wednesday. AFP

Israeli strikes kill 9 in Gaza

GAZA CITY—Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed nine Hamas militants on Tuesday as the Jewish state went on high alert a day after the first suicide bombing on its soil by Palestinian militants in a year. An Israeli air raid hit a police station near the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis soon after an early morning incursion by soldiers in the nearby border town of Rafah left two militants dead. Medics said seven militants from the Islamist movement were killed in the late afternoon air strike and another two were wounded. "The raid came in afternoon prayers inside the police station when the mosque's muezzin was at work," said a security official for Hamas, which has ruled the Gaza Strip since violently seizing it in June. AFP

N. Korea still a nuclear risk, says report

WASHINGTON—North Korea remains a nuclear proliferation risk and is probably still pursuing a uranium enrichment capacity, a US intelligence assessment conducted on Tuesday in an annual threat assessment to Congress. US national intelligence chief Mike McConnell noted that Pyongyang intends Dec. 31 deadline for making a full declaration of its nuclear program. "The US intelligence community continues to assume that North Korea has pursued a uranium enrichment capability at least in the past, with at least moderate confidence that it either continues today," the report said. In discussing proliferation risks, the report noted North Korea's missile sales to Iran and several Middle Eastern countries. AFP

Beatles' Indian guru Maharishi Yogi dies

ANTWERP—MAHARISHI Mahesh Yogi, a guru to the Beatles who introduced transcendental meditation to the West, died at his Dutch home overnight, a spokesperson said on Wednesday. He was said to be 91.

After meeting the Beatles and other celebrities and Pop icons in meditation, the Indian sparked gained a worldwide following with six million people taking his courses.

The reclusive guru with a flowing white beard moved his headquarters to the small southern Dutch village of Vlodrop in 1990.

He particularly enjoyed the appeal for funds to promote world peace, building a fourteen-story ranging from real estate dealing to a company selling ayurvedic medicine and cosmetics.

The Maharishi set up universities and schools all over the world and his Natural Law Party—which promotes yogic flying, a practice that involves sitting in the lotus position and bouncing into the air—has campaigned in dozens of countries.

Transcendental meditation, known as the way to be balanced, involves reciting a mantra that practitioners say helps the mind stay calm even under pressure. It has gradually gained medical support.

Last month the Maharishi stepped down as head of his organizations to concentrate on what he called "the field of silence," born in central India, the Maharishi rarely spoke about his early life, saying the past held little interest for him.

He first visited the United States in 1959 as part of a global tour to introduce transcendental meditation to the world, and from 1965 he began to make inroads.

The Beatles—John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—visited him in India in 1968, making him a household name round the world.

According to the TM organization, the Maharishi's message to mankind centered "Life is blissful and is born to enjoy. Within everyone is an unlimited reservoir of energy, intelligence, and happiness." Reuters

THE BEATLES John Lennon, left, Paul McCartney, center background, Ringo Starr, second from right, and George Harrison, right, join the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, center, as they arrive by train at Bangor, Wales, United Kingdom, to participate in a weekend of meditation in this file photo dated Aug. 26, 1967. —

It's religion vs money in Malaysian state polls

BUKIT BAHRU—THE POLITICAL battle lines are clear in Malaysia's predominantly Muslim state of Kelantan: religion versus money.

The federal government has promised millions of dollars of investment in a bid to win the state back from an Islamist party that has ruled the east coast landmass for 19 years.

But for many of Kelantan's voters, expected to go to the polls for federal and state elections in the next few weeks, material wealth—or the lack of it—may not seem as much as religious piety and a corruption-free environment.

"Islamic rule is very important," said Ms Tan, a tiny 30-year-old ethnic Chinese, as she poured over her half-moon glasses while paring over newspapers in her modest non-opera pants store.

"They follow religious laws. There is no corruption and they are more fair and honest." The vote is a test of whether a moderate, secular Muslim government can defeat a hardline Islamist party with promises of economic progress.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Barisan Nasional coalition is competing poor voters in Kelantan in a bid to shake them off from the grip of the fundamentalist Pan Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) that governs the northern state.

The sole state under opposition rule, Kelantan, is the only real election for power in the elections which are widely expected to extend Abdullah's coalition to power, although with a reduced majority.

A small farming area of 1.5 million people, Kelantan has seen few fruits of the country's rapid economic growth in the last decade.

In 2004, a week of in people lived in poverty, the third highest rate among Malaysian states, official figures show.

The government hopes to change this under a $34 billion plan to create a farming, energy and tourism hub encompassing the towns of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang and parts of Johor.

But for many the "point" appeal of the PAS remains the biggest draw.

"Kelantan is strongly religious-oriented," said Syed Husin Ali, an opposition party leader and former university professor specializing in rural poverty.

"As far as they are concerned, what is important is not material things, but the spiritual. PAS, of course, appeals to this kind of religious conservatism." Due to its population make-up—94 percent of its 1.4 million people are Muslims—Islam plays a big role in Kelantan.

Historically part of the Thai kingdom of Pattani and the ancient seat of Islamic civilization, Kelantan has an appearance of piety and austerity.

Many villagers live in rickety wooden houses and till the land, go to sea or sell farm produce by a lorry. With its strong emphasis on the afterlife, the state has most Islamic religious schools than either part of Malaysia.

Gambling joints, cinemas and nightclubs are not allowed in the state and alcohol can only be sold to non-Muslims.

Dike Inan, a group rental of cuddly ponies, it said to be a typical pastime. Reuters

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Bueno

PEOPLE walk past a structure damaged by tornadoes at a Caterpillar plant in Oxford, Miss. on Tuesday Feb. 5. AP

Tornadoes sweep US states; 22 dead

ATKINS, ARKANSAS—TORNADOES ACROSS FOUR SOUTHERN US states tore through homes, ripped the roof off a shopping mall and blew apart warehouses in a rare spasm of violent winter weather that killed at least 22 people and injured dozens more.

The twisters that slammed Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky were part of a line of storms that raged across the midsection of the US at the end of a day of Super Tuesday primaries in several states. Presidential candidates including Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama and Mike Huckabee even paused their victory speeches to remember the victims.

A spectacular fire erupted at a natural gas pumping station northeast of Nashville that authorities said could have been damaged by the storm, and an undetermined number of people were reported dead.

A couple and their 13-year-old daughter were killed in their home after a tornado touched down near the center of Atkins, a community of 3,000 along the Arkansas River in the central part of the state where authorities searched in the dark for survivors—in more storms.

"This was an extraordinary night," said Arkansas Gov. Mike Beebe. "Where it's compounded by darkness, that makes it that much more difficult."

Emergency crews went door to door Tuesday night seeking other possible victims in Atkins, evading amid a heavy scent from ruptured pipes. Power lines snaked along a street, and a deep-orange pickup truck rested on its side. A navy blue Mustang with a dented hood and was marked with spray paint to show it had been searched.

Outside one damaged home, human remains lay in the darkness, looking up only when a flashlight reached their eyes. Dr. Southern Second Street, a ranch home stood unscathed across the street from a concrete slab that had supported the house where three people died.

The storm killed at least 11 people in Arkansas, eight in Tennessee and three in Kentucky, authorities said.

The power was knocked out briefly at a Little Rock convention hall that hosted a watch party for Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor.

"While we hope tonight is a time for us to celebrate election results, we are reminded that nothing is as important as the lives of these fellow Arkansans, and our hearts go out to their families," Huckabee said.

At the Ali Matthews Civic Center in Atkins, a shelter was empty except for a American Red Cross volunteers and a single truck-stop woman toting medicine. The civic center had hosted an election precinct earlier Tuesday.

Cell phone pictures sent to television stations showed a dark, broad funnel approaching Atkins. Traffic was stacked on nearby interstate 40, with tractor workers on their sides.

At least six tornadoes touched down in the 160 kilometers between Oxford, Mississippi, and Jackson, Tennessee, according to the National Weather Service in Memphis, where deaths and damage were also reported. AP

50 bodies found in Iraq mass grave

BAGHDAD—IRAQI SECURITY FORCES found a mass grave containing about 50 bodies, some badly decomposed and others killed more recently, during a hunt on Tuesday for al-Qaeda militants north of Baghdad, police said.

Police and members of a neighborhood security unit raided a house thought to be used by Sunni Muslim al-Qaeda in an area near Samarra, 100 kilometers north of Baghdad, when they found 10 people who had been kidnapped from a nearby town.

Police said information from some of the people freed from that house led to the discovery of the grave nearby.

Local families had identified some of those buried in the grave but little other information was available, police said.

Three car bombs were also found in the area.

The discovery of the mass grave came after Iraq's temporary new national flag was raised over the country's parliament for the first time in a ceremony transported by the government as a break with the bloody past and a step toward reconciliation.

In another symbolic move, the government said it had started to rebuild a crossed Hussein statue in Samarra which was bombed two years ago, sparking sectarian violence which killed tens of thousands and took Iraq to the brink of civil war.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki presided over the flag raising outside his offices in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone after parliament last month approved a law to adopt the new flag.

Iraqi English commonly has long characterized a new flag, saying the old banner was a reminder of Saddam Hussein's brutality.

"It means the impact of the past," Maliki said. "The flag will fly for a year before a permanent replacement is chosen."

Kurdish officials had refused to fly the old flag, introduced after the coup by Saddam's Baath party in 1963, and it was banned in largely autonomous northern Kurdistan.

Officials in Fallujah in western Anbar province, once a Sunni Arab insurgent stronghold, have also said they would not fly it.

But many ordinary Iraqis saw the old flag as having little to do with Saddam, a Sunni Arab, and would prefer the government focused on issues such as improving basic services like electricity and water, which still are only intermittently. Reuters

Gov't controls Chadian capital

KHAMENA—CHAD'S GOVERNMENT controlled the capital and its immediate surroundings, the French ambassador to Chad said on Tuesday as France said it was ready to intervene militarily if need be.

"Today the city of Khamena is under (government) control, at least within a 15-kilometer radius," French ambassador Bruno Foucher told reporters in Khamena.

Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno had appeared "very confident" when they had last spoken Monday night, he added.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said on Tuesday that France, with 1,450 troops and Mirage fighter jets stationed in Chad, was ready to "do its duty" and intervene if need be.

France has 1,450 troops based in Chad and Paris sent an extra 150 troops to help evacuate foreign nationals.

"Now there is a legal decision taken unanimously by the Security Council, and if Chad was the victim of an aggression, France could in theory have the means to oppose such action," he said in the French coastal town of Brest.

"Everyone needs to think carefully about this." AFP

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Pool stars to boycott 2008 WPC

By Jose Navarro

THE WORLD POOL CHAMPIONSHIP IS ABOUT TO LOSE some of its biggest names.

The women's top six players vowed to boycott all events organized by the Boris Sports outfit of Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines chief Ben Bolokonon. The same outfit currently owns bidding rights for the most prestigious billiards tournament in the world.

"We declare that we will no longer join the tournaments organized by Ben Bolokonon (BBOC chief) and Boris Sports," the top players said in a manifesto they submitted to the Union and tournaments board yesterday.

The players, led by Hall of Famer Rhea "Rose" Bryson, former world No. 1 Francisca "Cyntiqui" Bustamante and former double world champion Bonnie Alcano, bowed to the GAB office to pit their newly-formed group under the supervision of the professional regulatory board and their grievances against the BBOC through a signed manifesto.

GAB chief Ben Bolotano formally recognized the players' group, the Billiard Managers and Player Associations of the Philippines (BMPAP). He called the first professional billiards organization in the country as a "big step in keeping the Philippines' supremacy in the sport."

Also present during the meeting were BMPAP incorporators Jessica "Bunot" Pagod, Nicky Montano and Edwin Reyes.

The BMPAP asked the GAB, the government regulatory body for professional sports, to supervise and control the participation of the players in both international and local tournaments.

Boris Sports has one year left in its three-year contract with Manchester Sports to stage the World Pool Championship. Alonzo topped the country's first bidding of the WPC at 2006 with Holiday Gamble pitching second last year behind Hard Finish of England.

Bolotano said the GAB would issue a memorandum declaring that all professional billiards activities must pass through the agency, including the participation of players who will compete in international events.

The players invoked their right to assess ties with the BBOC headed by Ernie Tejada, and justified the move by claiming that the national billiards federation has been exploiting them for money.

They noted that the BBOC is the governing organization for the sport in the country and a member of the Philippine Olympic Committee, for the mandate to train and develop players for international competitions but only on the amateur level.

"Thus, (BBOC officials) have been threatening to embark on tournaments abroad if we don't follow their orders," added the statement, citing the national frames world champion Alex Pagulayan [illegible] through.

Pagulayan was barred by the BBOC from playing in the second leg of the 2007 Cuatrero 9-Ball Tour in Singapore after BBOC officials charged him of intentionally dropping the game against Malaysian Ronshan Bin Amir during the initial leg of the tournament in Malaysia.

The BMPAP is also asking Bolokonon to account for the funds Boris Sports received from the government for hosting the WPC the last two years.

Aside from Reyes, Bustamante and Alcano, the other signatories to the manifesto were Grace Gomez, 1998 Asian Games gold medalist Cindy Villa, reigning national champion Lee Sun Corona and rising stars Joven Bustamante, Carlo Biado, Roscoe Pena, Roger Gutierrez, Antonio Claro, Tom Daquio, Jeff Labad, Jessie de Jesus, Mike Takayama, Jandel Marcos and Michael Gonzales.

REYES

BUSTAMANTE

GOMEZ

ALCANO

Not all experts convinced Manny will win

MARQUEZ

MANY BOXING SCHOLARS BANK MANNY Pacquiao as one of the world's best fighters, but some learned observers believe Juan Manuel Marquez is overlooked.

Tale Ko'o in Isle of Yahoo! Sports. In his "Challenge Thank Outside the Box" that appeared Feb. 5, Isle picked Marquez to win over the Filipino using nonfiy decisions in their rematch on March 15 in the Mandalay Bay & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

According to Isle, who covers boxing and mixed martial arts, "Marquez is simply a better boxer than Pacquiao, whose punches are still wide."

Isle explained that "not many can take advantage of them, but Marquez, who throws straight punches and is very accurate, can and will."

As in Pacquiao-Marquez I that ended up in a controversial draw after Marquez rose from three first round knockdowns, Isle believes the rematch is going to be close.

Among the world's best super featherweights, Isle also put Marquez on top, with Pacquiao a close second.

Others in Isle's list according to order are notorious Juan Catanio, Humberto Soto, knockout artist Edwin Valero and Alex Arthur.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao and Marquez have stepped up their preparation for the PPV (pay-per-view) slugfest bout by asking on sparring partners.

The Marquez camp has reportedly tabbed two Japanese super lightweights champion Shoichi Hayashi for spar duty while renowned trainer Freddie Roach has lined up unknown lightweight Juan Garcia from Phoenix and both Dom Blythe and Antonio Gallegos to spar with Pacquiao.

Roy Gueco

'Black Eyed' star sings for Pacman

ALLAN PWEDS, Stella Stanton in spite of up of the popular hip-hop group Black Eyed Peas, will sing the anthem of superstar Manny Pacquiao's first appearance in a live performance at the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas on March 15.

Pacquiao will battle Juan Manuel Marquez in a rematch dubbed "Unfinished Business."

Pacada visited the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood every day to watch Pacquiao in training.

Francis is chief Pacquiao's personally tailored Pacada to perform live his entrance music, and the singer will reportedly walk Pacquiao into the ring.

Pacquiao opened his three rounds victory over Agustin Bustamante Cervantes in Stockport this month with Mexican slugger Antonio Garcia, who has a record of 14 wins, on his side 13 KOs. Garcia has been scheduled a prompt version of Juan Manuel Marquez.

This was followed by four rounds of tuning the mitts with Freddie Roach.

Andrew Lagundaya, Court Boyce

MVP urges Abap to start search for new talents

By Ronnie E. Acuña

AMATEUR BOXING GODMOTHER Mercy K. Dangilinan strongly urged yesterday the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) to search for new talents in the wake of the country's failure to climb an Olympic slot in a recent qualifier in Bangkok.

The telecommunications magnate, who has committed P450 million to help Abap's campaign to reward the country with its first Olympic gold, said he was disappointed that the five Filipino boxers failed in their bid to join early qualifier Harry Tanamor for the Beijing Olympics set to start on Aug. 8.

"It is imperative that we begin the search now, not later," Dangilinan said in a statement.

"Everyone does so so that we need to take a long, hard look at the entire boxing program, especially our international and local competitions which must come from all over the country," he added.

Dangilinan said the Abap should adopt appropriate training methods and engage coaches who would not only raise the level of the fighters but also inspire them to achieve competitive excellence.

"We should be able to qualify eight boxers for the Olympics, just as Thailand just did," said Dangilinan, also the owner of professional basketball team Talk 'N' Text and head of the international basketball zip Philippines.

The last qualifier will be held next month in Kazakhstan.

Juan Tipon came closest in giving the Philippines a second Olympic slot in Bangkok, but he lost in the semifinals to Thai heavyweight Wuttipoj Prachakson, the 2004 Athens Olympic silver medalist.

Tipon's other teammates were Victor Peña, Excellent Dimaliw, Filipino-American light welterweight Adam Bigelow Peil, who was knocked out in the second round by a Mongolian foe, and five-round casualty Orlando Tacoyan Jr.

"I am convinced we have the talent and depth," said Dangilinan. "We've won titles in the professional ranks through such remarkable fighters as Manny Pacquiao, Gerry Peñalosa, Pernito Donaire and Harmito Cordero, all world champions."

"We need to discover their opposites in the amateur ranks."

JOHN Tipon (right) downs Thai Wuttipoj Prachakson in one of the glorious moments of MVP boxing in 2006.

Fischer's Pinoy heirs going after estate

By Francis T. J. Ochoa

SORRY FISCHER'S FILIPINO BAGGIO is making her claim to the late chess great's estate. And the lawyer hired by the girl's mother is into case of the legal proceedings admits that they are in for a tough ride.

"We have started by already taking the help of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)," said lawyer Sammy Estrera, who anchored by Marilyn Young to represent her seven-year-old daughter with Fischer in a bid to recover the 1.07 million pound estate in Iceland left by the iconic chess genius.

"The DFA's chief told me she would like to contribute her claim of Bobby's estate in behalf of their daughter," Estrera told the business.

The business tried to reach Young to no avail.

The bid of the mother and child, however, is expected to be resisted by Miyoko Watai, the alleged Japanese wife of Fischer and the chess genius's brother-in-law, Russel Tang.

"Miyoko is already in Iceland and the hired lawyer there," Estrera, an official of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, revealed. "They have presented a photocopied marriage certificate and promised an Icelandic court that they will present the original, which is still in Japan, very soon."

Estrera said the claim of the Young is more credible, adding that he doubts neither Watai is indeed Fischer's wife.

"I know for a fact that Bobby is not the marrying kind," Estrera said. "I met [Watai] in Tokyo during the 2006 Chess Olympiad and she never mentioned anything about being married to Fischer."

Estrera said Grandmaster Eugene Torre, a close friend of Fischer, is set to execute an affidavit expressing the same doubts.

That will be part of the documents Estrera will provide the court to prove the Young's rightful claim to the legal estate. Other documents include birth and baptismal certificates of Marilyn's daughter, Jinky, who was born on May 21, 2000 in Baguio City.

Marilyn Young also turned over to Estrera the child's passport, her photos with Fischer and their child with signature, and the latest bank statement by Fischer of 1,586 euros in their daughter on Dec. 4, 2007. The remittance was sent to a Philippine National Bank branch in Cebu.

Estrera said Marilyn told him that she and her daughter visited Fischer last in Iceland in 2005. The two spent three weeks together with the chess genius there. But Fischer regularly kept contact through text messages.

Estrera said Marilyn received her last text message on Jan. 16, the day before Fischer died of a lingering illness.

"In fact, Fischer was calling Marilyn up at around 11 p.m. the night before he died, but Marilyn left her cell phone and failed to take the call," Estrera revealed. "She cites every time she received a text because had she not entered the call, she could have spoken to Fischer one last time before he passed."

SPORTSWATCH

All eyes on country's motocross hosting

THE 2008 MOTOCROSS MASTERS OF Asia-Pacific Princess cup national Motocross Grand Prix is expected to give local and national tourism a boost with the host city's chance to showcase itself before foreign delegates.

It will be the fifth straight year that Mayor Edward S. Singson will be hosting the event, which will be covered by Star Sports and ESPN and will be beamed to over 600 million household worldwide.

"Hosting the event for the fifth straight year will further firm up Pueblo Princesa's status as the sports tourism capital of the Philippines," said Singson.

The event, supported by Oakley, Castrol and Bridgestone will feature champion riders from Asia-Pacific countries like Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Guam, USA, Iran, Thailand, China and the United Kingdom.

For details, check out www.motocross.org or www.mastersofasia.com or call 0911-0003363.

Las Piñas 3-cocker set

COCKERS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY clash today at Las Piñas Coliseum as the Gold 3-cock derby starts at 1 p.m. with Pinoy Cockers Club and Top Gamefowl as hosts.

14 is a tighter 4-cock derby with Farda Gamefowl of the National Cockers Association as host. Likewise, the UPC presents the Smallfowl Super Natural Wh. One Cock Derby and vs. 16 with P100,000 offered for an entry fee of P2,000.

Cyberfriends round 2 today

THE SECOND ROUND OF SUMMER ERA OF MIO Cyberfriends 5-cock derby takes centerstage today at San Juan Coliseum with cockers 16 fights scheduled. According to Cyberfriends president Rafael Dato, the groups member-cocker Ronald Ong (Ronald-Ed) whirlly is the country every year for the land-raising event. Meanwhile, SJCA Rafael Pantoja 5-cock derby starts on Feb. 25 and 27. For details, 7206000 and 7206002.

Concert spices up SMC-PSA Awards

HEATED ACTION: James Yap of Purefoods drives against Red Bull's Carlo Sharma in their Smart-PBA Philippine Cup semifinals encounter. After the (not-so-) cool, the league is scheduled to hold the Barangay Ginebra Kings-PBA encounter. (PBA stars to not vouch as 4-18)

ON ENTERTAINMENT SPECTACLE FEATURING a rock and dance concert, plus a glitzy fashion show will spice up the San Miguel Corporation-Philippine Sportswriters Association Annual Awards (SMC-PSA) this on Feb. 16 at the Old Hall of Fame.

Top billed by reggae master Tropical Depression, Bagsakan City rocker Gemma Bond and all-male dance group Harmat Dancers, the rock and dance concert lends a musical touch to the day-long affair, which culminates in the unveiling of 2007's top sports achievers.

Joining the two bands in the concert, are other rock favorites Dream Kitchen, Pamada and Cool Cool Jazz.

The Harmat Dancers, are the performers for the dance part of the concert.

In between the musical journey is a fashion show presumably novel, which will feature its latest summer collection and outerwear.

The concert-cum-fashion show is scheduled from 12 noon to 6 p.m., just before the annual awards rites bring the top achievers of the sporting series to the year that has just passed, to be led by co-athletes of the Year world boxing champion Nonito Donaire and swimmer Miguel Molina.

Also opting up the affair is a sports curtain raiser given to the country's top athletes of the past and the present.

The event backed by Shakey's, the Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Amateur Track and Gaming Corp., Asiri, and Rainmaker's Trophies and Sculptures (www.rainmakerdesigns.com), will be broadcast live over DZSR Sports Radio 918.

New Life extends win streak

FORCED TO A THREE-SET BATTLE, Makati Gospel Center New Life Academy held its ground and scored a 25-25, 25-23, 25-20 win over Colegio de San Agustin recently to extend its unbeaten run to the girls' division of the third Tele's Sports Junior Volleyball League at the Colegio de San Lorenzo Gym.

MGC New Life Academy scrambled to regain its bearings in the second and third sets to pull off the close win, to fifth straight, while handing San Agustin its third loss in four games.

Gillian gals gamers in Week 1 of the event sponsored by Shakey's, Brown Tassie, Mikasa, Asics, Dunlop Gamers and Marta Sports are Saint Jude Catholic School swept its two matches to improve to 2-2, a record later matched by Woodrow.

Boxing patron unhappy with Bangkok flop

IN HUDDLE

Beth Cielo

A SPORTS scribe was talking to here unremarkable for Bill during the press conference hosted by the newly established Philippine Sports Association of the Philippines (PSAPI) at the Amadeo's Restaurant in Greenhills City last week.

"For the first time in my life, I felt a bit too overdressed for the occasion," he said.

A sports scribe, overdressed? It was hard to imagine.

"What were you wearing?" I asked.

"Nothing special, just a collared t-shirt, a pair of dockers and walking shoes," he replied.

"Yet, tell that being overdressed? Did everybody else come in their undergarments?" I pushed for funny.

* * *

"Not exactly," the scribe answered. "But most of the billionaire players looked like they just got out of bed and headed straight to the premises without washing their faces or combing their hair.

"Except for a few, like the real big name players, they were garbed in casual-cut t-shirts, shorts and Sperlin slippers."

Even Jones Innocentes, the guy who read of the problem the minutes signed by players, managers and other billionaire stakeholders, was dressed like one of the scribe said.

"They may look broke, but they're not broke. I saw Jones drive away in a fairly late model sedan after the proceeds."

Well, the players were probably trying to make a fashion statement.

In the manifesto, the PSAPI accused the current PSGP leadership of lack of transparency and a dictatorial style of management.

* * *

I didn't want to give credence to so-called I've been getting about a project of player leader Jeremy Talk 'N Text and Magnolia, but sometimes when there's smoke, there's fire. So I decided to check with Talk 'N Text governor Ricky Vargas just the same.

Ricky's answer was short. He said the team has no need to unleash — the Phone Pals only need to enhance their performance.

Talk was that the Phone Pals would be molded into a true blue team, meaning composed mostly of Ateneo players.

Ricky said there is no truth to this.

Incidentally, amateur boxing patron Mercy K Dangilinan issued a press statement yesterday expressing his disappointment over the dismal performance of our Beijing Olympics aspirants in the recently concluded Asia-qualifying tournament in Bangkok.

"Does this mean that MVP might be withdrawing his support for amateur boxing?" asked a sports editor.

Ricky said MVP will continue to support amateur boxing.

* * *

In its 187 years of existence, San Beda College has produced numerous able individuals whose accomplishments have earned them well-deserved berths in the circle of timeless Bedans.

This year, three former national swimmers, three former record-holders and champions, will be elevated to the Hall of Fame, the Benedictine school's highest form of recognition.

They are Carlos "Pinky" Brosas, Ed Rosario and Dr. Ramon Rosario Roque. Pinky is still very much involved in swimming as coach of the Philippine team, Ed is a successful businessman while Dr. Cardie is deputy secretary general of the House of Representatives.

A famous case made graduate, Dr. Cardie is also a graduate school professor and has been a respected solicitor.

The awarding will be held during the Red and White Ball on Feb. 23 at the MBC tent.

* * *

Tony Silva, a graduate of Aquilo High Class '58, is inviting her classmates to a reunion of sorts at a celebrating their golden jubilee. The working festivities spin off with an alumni homecoming on Feb. 16, followed by an outing at the Pagkiwan Resort in Los Baños, Laguna, Feb. 19, and a grand reunion at the Philippine Columbian Association in Pasay City, Feb. 23. Meanwhile on Feb. 23, Pres. Rodolfo Ed. Cruz, Treasurer Ed Cruz, Tony Silva, Nora Tolito Salamanca (0409-2151) and Jack Glaza (0917-6252/9917-7364-117).

Huge obstacles stand between Kenyan women and Olympic stint

NAIROBI—LACK OF EDUCATION, sexist male officials and traditional views on marriage remain major obstacles facing Masai Mara Kenyan girls aspiring to be athletes, says one of the country's first female Olympians.

Lydia Stephens-Oluch wants more women to follow her footsteps and has taken upon herself to give young Kenyan women a better chance at Olympic success.

Despite the country's running pedigree, no Kenyan woman has ever won an Olympic gold medal. Kenya's men have won 17 gold medals, all but one in athletics, while the women have had to be satisfied with a total of three silvers and one bronze.

"Some of the problems we faced will impede our female athletes' advancement today and better ways must be found to help them," said Stephens-Oluch, who was one of three female athletes who Kenya first included women in their Olympic team at the 1968 Games in Mexico.

"Parents must educate their daughters. Most of them just marry their daughters to get married and have some in-law. It is a curse and a laughing work if one's daughter is not married," Stephens-Oluch told Reuters.

Stephens-Oluch, who now lives with Sofia Chesnokova and Elizabeth Chesire in Mexico, added: "It's girl to popular, everyone starts making sexual favors, love affairs abound. Because of their culture, they really fall for the trap.

"Male officials take them to hotels and, due to a lack of exposure, they are electrifying and meaning some for the first time and think they are on top of the world."

She said education was the greatest means of empowering women and recommended talent-spotting potential athletes when they were young.

"Identify them at an early age and put them in boarding schools or well-managed camps where they can be fully trained," she said.

She also wants women to get involved in the administration of the sport to push their agenda. Reuters

* * *

BEIJING—Eight-time Olympic gold medalist Bernard Parker is going to skip the Beijing Games.

The 45-year-old German kayaker, who has also won four silver medals, has competed at six different Olympics but said she wouldn't be ready in time for the 2008 Games.

"I'm sorry for my fans, but my decision has been made," Parker told Germany's ARD Radio on Tuesday. "I don't have enough time for the training which would be necessary for a successful start at the Olympics."

Parker's match for Olympic debut at the 1980 Moscow Games, competing for East Germany. She represented that country again at the 1988 Seoul Olympics after skiing at the 1984 Los Angeles Games because of the Soviet-led boycott.

She competed for Germany in 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004. Mother had also won 27 world championship titles. AP

Becierra nips rival, advances to Last 16

SANTE BECIERRA DRONED THE FIRST playoff hole to nip Luke Humphries of Australia and advance to the second round of the match play event of the New South Wales Strokes Golf championship at the Pennant Hills course in New South Wales Sunday.

Becierra, who made it to the tournament proper by finishing 22nd in the rain-shortened stroke play eliminations, scrambled for par on the 18th hole to draw level with Humphries, then birdied the first extra hole from six feet after a superb approach.

Humphries had by one hole thrice, the last on 17 where the ICTSI nominee fumbled with a bogey that he flubbed an 8-foot par putt on the 15th then lost it after missing the green in sudden death.

The win sent Becierra, the reigning Hong Kong champion, into the Last 16 of the tournament against Daniel Skelton of Bellmore, who edged John Fitzgerald, 1-up.

Rohan Blizard of New South Wales lived up to his billing by dominating Christopher Dean of Moorebilliards, posting a 6-hole lead after 9holes before cruising in a 5 & 3 win.

No. 2 Tim Hart also coasted to a 5 & 2 win over Tim Stewart to arrange a duel with Chris Gurney, who beat Alex Beale, 3 & 2.

Heat cuts Japan practice; Davis Cup draw set today

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE HOT WEATHER FORCED THE Japanese team yesterday to cut its workout at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Courts for the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania tie with the Philippines starting tomorrow.

"It's just a waste of energy so we can't play five to six hours as we normally do back home," said Japanese veteran playing captain Kiji Takeuchi. "That's also the reason Filipinos have difficulty playing in Japan, because we have a 40-degree weather difference."

But Takeuchi, who has a losing record against the Philippines in previous Asia-Oceania ties as a player and coach, expects his boys to perform well because the tie will be staged on hard courts.

He noted that the Japanese are familiar with hard courts, adding that the dirt courts of the Philippine Columbian Association, site of previous Davis Cup ties, is something they didn't have back home.

But the hard courts also is the reason of choice of the country's main man Cecil Mamiit, who helped the country win a tie against Pakistan last year and a gold medal in the Southeast Asian Games in 2005 at the RMTC.

The other members of the Cabusao Lhuillier RP team are Eric Taino, PJ Tierro and Johnny Arcilla. Japan is made up of veterans Takao Suzuki and Satoshi Iwabuchi and youngsters Go Soeda and Yuichi Sugita.

"They are a very impressive team," said RP top-playing captain Martin Mas of the Japanese. "We still don't know who they will field against us because all of them deserve a tie in the lineup."

Dressing of key will be held today as the Century Park Hotel at 8 a.m. while the matches will be from Friday to Sunday.

"We just have to stay accurate," added Mas. "We are ready but right now our only advantage is playing on our home court."

Takeuchi partnered with H. Shinozaki when they lost the pivotal doubles match to February of 1988 to Raymond Suarez and Rod Ballad. That loss enabled the country to score a 3-2 victory.

He also coached the Japanese team led by Shuzo Matsuoka, which moved to the Joseph Lizardo-coached RP Davis Cup team of 1993.

The score is 1-1 when the tie is played on hard courts but the Japanese held a 13-9 edge overall in their Davis Cup duel with the Filipinos.

DOC Tuiza (left) and Cecil Mamiit show perfect teamwork during one of their stints at a doubles team. The two will spearhead a Philippine charge in a highly-anticipated tie versus Asian heavyweight Japan. The draw between the two teams will be held today. PHOTO

Crystal claims Southern lead

BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPION CRYSTAL SUN put in a solid round of 36 points under the Mickey scoring system to open a two-point lead over Del Monte teammate Eva Dillman at the start of the 49th Southern Ladies golf tournament at the Sunday Golf and Country Club yesterday.

Mick came away with an eagle on No. 5 but it was her Bandana-a-hole backside of the par-70 layout that carried her past her rivals, including SEA Games silver medalist Anyat Tangonan and reigning national champion and BML Open winner Chalmie Borda of the ICTSI squad.

Despite her eagle, the 16-year-old Xavier-an now will make the cut or not over with a birdie against two bogeys and one double-bogey that she birthed Nos. 16, 11 and 17 and passed the rest for the day's least under-par effort of four in nine play.

Mikaela launched her bid with an even par 70 worth 36 points while Tangonan struggled on the greens and bombed with a non-over 73 for 42 points in a tie with ICTSI nominee Louise Mendez.

Borda, who in three straight venues in the early going of the season, gasped for form and carved in 51 points or a three over 73 for a share of fifth place with South, sounds' Stanchine Barnapiri and Del Monte's Kristine Leslie.

"Nothing is clicked straight venues in the early going of the season, gasped for form and carved in 51 points or a three over 73 for a share of fifth place with South, sounds' Stanchine Barnapiri and Del Monte's Kristine Leslie.

PARADE OF CHAMPS

New York Giants quarterback Eli Manning celebrates during a Super Bowl parade in New York. Manning was the Most Valuable Player as the Giants scored a stunning upset over the New England Patriots, 17-14, in the National Football League championship game.

St. Jude gains Tieng Lian semis; Grace pulls off shocker vs UNO

HOST ST. JUDE FEARTHRES ITS MASTER STAR Sr. Stephen, 56-48, to clinch a semifinal berth, while Grace Christian High School forced a sudden death vs UNO High School by pulling off a stunning 17-64 win Tuesday in the 23rd Mike's Manila Tieng Lian Basketball Tournament at the UNO gym.

With LA Cruz at the helm, Grace came through with a backbreaking run in the playoff period to tip the game with seven and fourteen the twice-turned UNO High School in their quarterfinal game.

In what could be his finest game so far in the tournament sponsored by Puma, Converse, Burlington, Hi Jeans, Skillers, Dakes, Fabels, Healthy Options, Inc. and MEI Network, Cruz tallied 20 points and 11 rebounds.

Cruz was ably supported by Christian Ivo and Jason Tan who contributed for 10 points. The duo in the match in duties on Saturday.

In clinching a semis slot, the host squadronned on the steady shooting of Kyle Ong, Stallone Chua and Kim Lou Sun Sr. Stephen for the second time this season.

Konica Minolta golf to enforce handicap rule

FOREIGN AMATEURS WITHOUT ICTSI-certified handicap indices will play or not in the Konica Minolta Pro-Am golf championship, officials said yesterday.

The country's top 50 pros will be paired with local amateurs having handicaps of five or below as of January 2008.

The tournament is set March 3-8 at the Riverside Golfers course in Silang, Cavite.

"We will have to be strict with handicaps to preserve the integrity of the tournament," said retired commodore Danny Ocampo, the chair of the organizing committee and the PGAP vice president.

The event is funded by U Bix Corporation and organized by the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

For more details, call U-Bix at 8970810, NGAP at 5250007 and 524-7160, and The Riviera at 8880000 and (046) 415-2000/415-0207.

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SPORTS

Gasol sparkles in first day as a Laker; James lifts Cavs

NEW JERSEY—JAI GASOL MARKED A successful debut for the Los Angeles Lakers by scoring 24 points and grabbing 12 rebounds in a 105-90 road victory over the New Jersey Nets on Tuesday.

Acquired from the Memphis Grizzlies last week, the Spanish forward center sat out Sunday's contest because of a sore back but enjoyed a stellar first game on a night when Lakers star Kobe Bryant scored just six points.

"I felt pretty comfortable," Gasol told reporters. "I still don't have a lot of the wrinkles and details. It always makes the game much easier when the guys on the court know what they are doing."

The 24 points by Gasol were the most scored by a debuting Lakers player since Magic Johnson had 26 in his first game as a rookie in 1979.

Bryant, playing the last three quarters with a dislocated right little finger, was 2-for-13 from the field and was held to single digits for the first time in over a year.

In Cleveland, the Cavaliers' LeBron James had 33 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds in a 114-113 home triumph over Boston.

"This is not how we want to win games, by giving up 50 percent shooting to our opponent on our home floor," James said. "But a win is a win for us and against a good team, a very defensive team."

In Indianapolis, Tim Duncan dominated the middle and San Antonio's stingy second half defense turned a close game into a 116-89 rout of the Pacers.

In Philadelphia, Andre Iguodala scored 29 points and Philadelphia stunned Washington with a 17-4 run late in the fourth period, handing Washington its fourth straight loss, 101-96.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Mo Williams scored 31 points and led a fourth-quarter rally to help Milwaukee snap a three-game losing streak via a 110-97 triumph over the Grizzlies.

Reuters, AP

NEW LA Lakers acquisition Pau Gasol soars for a lay-up against a tenacious defense by New Jersey's Nenad Krstic (left) around the second-most number of points by a debuting Laker in the LA history. —

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Heat deal Shaq to Suns for Marion

MIAMI—SHAQUILLE O'NEAL HAS been traded by the Miami Heat to the Phoenix Suns for forward Shawn Marion and guard Marcus Banks, league sources said yesterday.

O'Neal is scheduled to take a trip to Phoenix Wednesday for a physical before the deal gets official.

O'Neal has repeatedly known that the Heat were out to trade him, a confidant of the 14-time NBA All-Star center told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

O'Neal's associate, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to reveal anything publicly, indicated a move would be imminent.

A Heat spokesman said the team had no comment, and several team officials didn't immediately return phone calls from the AP.

O'Neal is averaging a career-low 14.2 points and has been sidelined for the past two weeks by a leg injury.

The Arizona Republic reported a deal could be imminent and that O'Neal had contacted some Suns players Sunday.

But since the Los Angeles Lakers struck a deal with Memphis last week for Pau Gasol (see story above) to strengthen its lineup, there's been speculation about how other Western Conference teams would respond.

And a thing in this Suns deal would create a hurt.

It isn't known if O'Neal—who has two full seasons remaining after this one on his $100 million, five-year contract—would welcome a trade.

A four-time NBA champion, O'Neal entered this season talking about how he wanted to win at least one more title, saying his "legacy" wouldn't be complete unless he left the game with at least five rings. AP

IT'S GOOD bye Shawn Marion (right) will be saying goodbye to Amare Stoudemire and the Phoenix Suns, who are set to welcome Shaquille O'Neal (inset). —

Performance Beyond Compare
THE TESLAR COLLECTION
How does TESLAR technology work?
The TESLAR Effect uses "little components to make of the magnetic energy in using a cell phone"
While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial modulation" of serious health states.
elastic changes
performance level
energy level
experience
PHILIPP STEIN
TESLAR

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KOREAN AIR

RP seen to weather global slowdown

Citigroup economist forecasts 6.5% growth in '08

By Doris C. Dumlao

GLOBAL BANKING GIANT CITIgroup sees the Philippines remaining resilient to a widely feared US-led global slowdown and sustaining an average economic growth of 6.5 percent this year.

Citibank economist for the Philippines Jun Trinidad stressed this while domestic expansion this year would likely slow down this year from last year's, a favorable fiscal and monetary policy environment would provide sufficient buffer against an exports-driven slowdown in exports and offshore demand for Philippine labor, allowing the country to sustain a respectable growth this year.

Trinidad's projected growth is gross domestic product of 6.5 percent this year was well within the government's official target range of 6.0-7.5 percent.

"It's not as high as last year but it's certainly going to be much better than what you'll probably see in the US or in industrialized economies," Trinidad said in a presentation before high-net worth Citibank clients.

The government has much expected that with the real amount of goods and services produced by the economy, grew 7.3 percent in 2007, its best performance in 31 years.

"Domestic demand will provide the spark and causes that this year we'll be growing by 6.5 percent," he said.

He pointed out that the government's increased fiscal spending, in turn made possible by the improvement in its cash budget position, as well as the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' bias for lower interest rates would keep the country resilient to external shocks this year.

Trinidad projected that the country's first-quarter growth would be decent at 5.6 percent but expansion in the succeeding quarters would hit closer to 7 percent. Second-quarter growth was projected at 6.9 percent, third quarter at 6.7 percent and the fourth quarter at 6.9 percent.

"Fiscal spending is creating new jobs so there's a strong pick up in public and private spending. It will tide us through the dark clouds of a US slowdown," he said.

But Trinidad noted that the export sector would be battered by the slowdown in the United States, which accounts for about 15-16 percent of the country's exports earnings.

"Imagine what happens to remittances when a global downturn happens and demand for Philippine labor may be at risk," he said.

Citing local consumer behavior based on the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' quarterly

BP TODAY B2

Gov't to promote regional hubs for BPO investors

By Rumel M. Dumlao

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION technology hubs outside Metro Manila are expected to drive the business process outsourcing sector's 30-percent growth to $7 billion this year as the industry primes "next-wave cities" to attracting international clients.

Felicitas Aguinaldo-Reyes, executive director of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, said the investment roadmaps of these cities would be showcased in the e-Services Global Sourcing Conference And Exhibition.

e-Services 2008 would be held Feb. 11-12 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

According to Cimes, the so-called tier-

CONTINUED ON B2

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE
40.79 = $1
Mid-Eye, Feb. 6, 2008

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 1.7% lower on US woes

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.7 percent lower yesterday, after Wall Street slumped overnight on continued fears the US economy has slipped into recession, dealers said.

Negative leads at home also weighed on sentiment, with Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) taking a hit from President Macapagal-Arroyo's announcement Tuesday that the government would move to bring down electricity costs.

The composite index fell 54.72 points to close at 3,229.84, its smallest finish in almost a week.

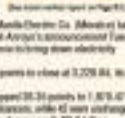
The broader all-shares index dropped 35.34 points to 1,870.47. Third-wave 115-stockers and 26 advances, while 42 were unchanged. Volume amounted to one billion shares worth P2.6 billion.

US stocks tumbled Tuesday as recession fears escalated after the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) said its index of service sector activity, which accounts for about two-thirds of the economy, dropped below 50 in January — a level that indicates contraction.

"Economists consider the drop in ISM's index of service sector activity ... as another strong signal that the US economy is slipping

SHARES B3

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B3)

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■ **NFA sells P8B worth** of 10-year bonds /B4
■ **RCBC posts 56%** profit growth /B5

Philex reports 62% surge in 2007 profit to ₱5B

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson and Amy R. Remo

Gets boost from high metal prices

LISTED MINE PHILEX MINING Corp. yesterday reported a 62-percent jump in net income to ₱5 billion in 2007 from the previous year's ₱3.09 billion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Philex reported that its value per share had likewise risen to ₱1.497 from the previous year's ₱1.044 a share.

The company said operating revenues amounted to ₱12.2 billion last year, up by 22 percent from the previous year's ₱9.96 billion.

Increased copper and gold production and higher metal prices boosted the mining firm's net income in 2007.

For 2008, market sources remained optimistic about Philex's income prospects due to prevailing high gold prices that have hovered at ₱900 an ounce. Copper prices are also holding due to strong demand from China.

Higher metal prices are seen in effect this effects of a stronger peso vs. the Dollar, which mainly is dollars, market sources said.

In a separate disclosure, Philex also reported that for January this year, it produced ₱906 million worth of copper and gold, based on provisional metal prices.

It said it delivered and treated 784,476 dry metric tons of copper and gold ore at the Benguet Smelter facilities.

This resulted in 6,971 dry metric tons of copper concentrate with an average 23.89-percent copper, 51.45 grams per dry metric ton of gold and 47.78 grams per dry metric ton of silver.

The reported volume has equivalent metal content of 1.66 million kilograms (3.66 million pounds) of copper, 358,148 grams (11,480 ounces) of gold and 333,198 grams (10,712 ounces) of silver.

Phinma buying Naga school for ₱458M

BACOLOD CONsolidated Industries Inc., the publicly listed flagship company of the Phinma Group, has secured the green light from its board to buy up to 80 percent of University of Nueva Caceres Inc. (UNC), the biggest university in Naga City in the Bicol region, for ₱458.4 million.

UNC is the third acquisition for Bacolod in the telecom duopoly over the last four years.

"Naga is a high growth city that enjoys local good governance and it [UNC] is the largest school in Naga," Bacolod-based vice president Sabero M. Lerma said.

UNC has some 6,200 students and offers preschool, elementary, high school, college and graduate studies.

It was founded by economist, educator and lawyer Jaime Hernandez in 1948 as a small college in Naga City with a total student population of 800. It acquired the status of a university in 1954.

UNC offers undergraduate degrees in arts and sciences, accountancy, business economics, company studies, education, engineering, nursing, law and teaching.

Bacolod also owns 79 percent of Aquinas University in Legazpi City, which is acquired in 2004. Aquinas University is recognized to be the leading university in Central Luzon with its direct advantage in English communication and information technology studies. Albert Sanchez-Lacson

NEGHS Bacolod president, incoming president of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Association (Creba), confers with NHCDA chair Raquel Fernando on building an recent property gains. Romero, chair of R-B Builders Inc., outlined a program of press briefs telling what other groups such as tourism, BPO and OFW-related sectors that directly spur construction and property industry growth. Fernando was guest of honor during rites to induct new Creba officers at the Hotel Interior. Others in photo are lawyer Manuel Barrios, founding Creba head, and Rachel Bautista, Creba executive vice president.

Brokerage says stock mart bull run not yet over

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

ONLINE STOCKBROKER COSTAGIN Inc. sees remote bullish despite the volatility in global financial markets, saying the Philippine economy could weather a US-led economic slowdown.

In a briefing Tuesday, Costagin Online head of research Ayel Lee Tan noted that the Philippine economy was expected to be resilient against a global economic slowdown due to its low dependence on the weakening US economy.

"The bull market is not yet over. It is just the US economy's weakness driving the weakness in local markets," Tan said.

Tan also said that Philippine exports to the US merely accounted for 17 percent of the country's total exports in the first 11 months of 2007 from its peak of 46 percent in 1992, while net exports accounted for a very small portion of the economy at less than 1 percent of gross national product (GNP) as of September 2007.

While remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFW) from the US comes half of total remittances to the Philippines, Tan said the impact on consumer spending should not be as substantial since OFW remittances from the United States accounted for only 7.5 percent of total consumer spending.

"The improving employment outlook locally, driven by strong demand from the BPO (business process outsourcing) segment and rising investments, and the increasing availability of cheap and affordable credit should continue to facilitate consumer spending," Tan said.

She also noted that unemployment and underemployment rates were falling, reaching 6.3 percent and 18.1 percent respectively in October, down from 7.3 percent and 20.4 percent year-on-year.

Low interest rates and the resurgence of government spending also contributed to drive the Philippine economy. Yield on the benchmark 91-day treasury bills fell to an average of 3.6 percent in 2007 from 5.4 percent in 2006, Tan said.

"A true-to-form contrarian usually looks well for the stock market when the lower cost of borrowing for companies which convert in debts for their expansion plans.

Tan added that low inflation, favorable liquidity conditions and slowing growth in money supply would keep interest rates low.

"Recall that inflation averaged only 2.8 percent in 2007 and is expected to increase from 4 to 5 percent in 2008. Although rising oil prices will push up inflation, the impact will be mitigated by the strengthening peso," she said.

Costagin Online also expects the peso to remain strong in 2008, boosted by increasing OFW remittances and the country's significant gross international reserve position of $33.2 billion as of end-2007.

Tan said that government spending would remain robust given the improvement in the fiscal position. For the first 11 months of 2007, the government recorded a budget surplus of ₱12.6 billion, spurred by higher tax collections and asset sales.

The government plans to raise its spending by another 4.6 percent to ₱1.34 trillion this year, with infrastructure spending to increase to 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2013 from 2 percent in 2006.

Despite the favorable economic backdrop, Tan said Costagin Online expected the stock market index hitting 4,300 toward the end of 2008, instead of its earlier forecast of 4,600-4,800.

Shares close ...

Brokerage B4

further into a recession," said Francisco Sicat, a former PLDT director.

It was the first time the US service sector shrank in five years.

The United States is the country's biggest market for exports and a key source of remittances from overseas-based Filipinos, which have been fuelling consumer spending at home.

Markets said yesterday's selling was more of a knee-jerk reaction to the surprisingly weak ISM data and did not indicate a reversal of the market trend.

"We believe that the Philippine economy may withstand a US recession much better than other countries. The country's economic expansion has been domestic-driven and not export-led as other economies are," he said.

"Thus, he said "a pullback can still be regarded as a correction and not yet a trend reversal."

Meanwhile, big caps, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's biggest company by market value, was down ₱50 at ₱2,800. AFP

February 6, 2008

Country	Stock	Close Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dow	12,821.35	1,000.00	45,000
Japan	Nikkei	13,605.68	106.12	4,774.50
United Kingdom	Footsie	5,958.69	464.90	20,920.50
Hong Kong	Hang Seng	26,326.00	2,053.32	92,399.40
Taiwan	Taiex	8,972.60	699.97	31,498.65
Canada	Tsx	13,231.31	1,032.00	46,440.00
Singapore	Straits	3,466.96	270.50	12,172.50
Australia	Sydney	6,113.64	476.92	21,461.40
Malaysia	Klse	1,445.03	112.73	5,072.85
South Korea	Kse	1,959.37	152.87	6,879.15
Brazil	Bovespa	64,931.37	5,065.00	227,925.00
Indonesia	Jakarta	2,400.74	187.29	8,428.05
Thailand	Set	1,291.48	100.78	4,535.10
UK	Eurotop	1,145.80	89.40	4,023.00
Euro	Dax	7,949.09	620.00	27,900.00
France	Cac	5,905.71	460.90	20,740.50
China	Sse	4,394.96	342.90	15,430.50
Denmark	Kcom	1,114.61	86.97	3,913.65
India	Sensex	14,167.53	1,105.00	49,725.00
Malaysia	Klcomp	1,117.57	87.20	3,924.00
New Zealand	Nzx	3,347.92	261.20	11,754.00
Sweden	Sxxp	1,102.09	85.99	3,869.55
Taiwan	Wtx Futures	8,287.00	646.50	29,092.50

Source: Reuters, Bloomberg, Philippine Stock Exchange, Philippine Dealing & System Holdings Corp. Prepared by Philippine Stock Exchange

Philippine Stock Exchange

As of February 6, 2008

Company	Open	High	Low	Close	Volume
A					
Alaska Milk Corp.	10	10.1	10	10.1	200,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	73	73	69.5	69	1,130,000
China Banking Corp.	8.65	8.65	8.65	8.65	1,000
Citi Savings Bank	25	25	25	25	100
Equitable PCI Bank	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,140,000
Export and Industry Bank Inc. A	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	2,000
Export and Industry Bank Inc. B	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	2,000
Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.	45	45	44.5	44.5	1,287,750
Philippine National Bank	37.5	37.5	36	36	1,000,000
Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	7.5	8.25	7.5	8	1,000,000
Security Bank Corp.	75	75.5	75	75.5	1,000,000
B					
Bacnotel Inc.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	4,000
Chelsea Holdings Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	10,000
First National Partners Holdings Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	10,000
Jibalil Co.	3.3	3.35	3.3	3.35	200,000
Manila Mandaue Ferry Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
Nickel Asia Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	1,000,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	1,000,000
C					
Alaska Power Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.05	3.1	1,000,000
Centertown Inc.	18.5	18	18	18.5	100,000
Cebu Air Holdings Inc.	18.5	18.5	18	18.5	1,000,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	1,000,000
Cebu Pacific Inc.	7	7.5	7	7.5	2,000,000
Chelsea Logistics Holdings Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Chelsea Shipping Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Cosco Capital Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	1,000,000
Cyber One Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1,000,000
Cyber Bay Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1,000,000
Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	5,000
Disaya Holdings	2.05	2.05	2.05	2.05	17,000
San Miguel Corp. A	75	75	75	75	10,000
San Miguel Corp. B	74.5	74.5	74.5	74	1,000,000
Universal Robina Corp.	13.5	14.5	13.5	14.5	1,500,000
D					
DM Wenceslao and Associates Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
E					
Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	0.75	0.8	0.75	0.8	10,000,000
SM Prime Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
F					
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Fort Bonifacio Development Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
G					
Global-Estate Resorts Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
H					
Alliance Global Group Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	1,000,000
Megaworld Land Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
I					
Ayala Land Inc.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	500,000
Ayala Corp.	500	500	500	500	10,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	10,000
Cebu Land Bank Holdings Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	10,000
Filipino Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Global-Estate Resorts Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
J					
A Brown Co. Inc.	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1,000,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	1,000,000
Ayala Land Inc.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	10,000,000
Cebu Air Inc.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	10,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	10,000
Cebu Land Bank Holdings Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1,000,000
Cosco Capital Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000,000
Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Disaya Holdings Inc.	2.05	2.05	2.05	2.05	10,000
Filipino Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Global-Estate Resorts Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
M					
Manila Water Co. Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	1,000,000
Ortigas Land Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Ortigas Land Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
O					
Ortigas Land Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Ortigas Land Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
P					
Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
R					
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
S					
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4	4	4	4	10,000
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
V					
Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Z					
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000

Carlson Hotels to manage SM hotel

By Elizabeth Sánchez-Lacson

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. SEO 'P' (SM) signed Singapore-based Carlson Hotels Worldwide-Asia Pacific to manage a P2.4-billion hotel that will rise in the group's sprawling SM Mall of Asia Complex in Pasay City.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, SMIC vice president for investor relations Corazon Gotiduc said a management agreement inked with Carlson Hotels allows the latter to operate and manage the new hotel building, which will have two wings—one under the five-star Regent brand and the other under the four-star Radisson brand.

The hotel structure will be built by SMIC's subsidiary Hotel Specialists Inc.

Construction of the hotel building will start by the middle of this year with RSS International Pte. Ltd. as the project's architectural designer.

The hotel is expected to be completed late next year.

The Carlson Group is a leading consumer services provider in the marketing, travel and hospitality industries.

It owns the T.G.I. Friday's and Regent Seven Seas Cruises brands, among others.

The Regent Manila Bay City hotel wing will be branded solely as the Radisson Hotel Manila Bay City.

The Radisson will have 500 guest rooms while the Regent will offer 50 large suites, including a 400-square-meter presidential suite.

"The hotel project is a much-welcomed and highly anticipated addition to the rapidly developing SM Mall of Asia complex. The two iconic prime location creates a vibrant customer base for us, given their proximity to the country's largest mall, the SM Mall of Asia, and to the EMC Convention Center," said Merrill Yu, senior vice president for SMIC's hotel investment group.

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NFA sells P8B worth of 10-year bonds

To summit up

BREAKTHRU

Consuelo R. Bonoil III

EVERYONE SHOULD BE looking up in business because the Department of Energy just held due to so-called energy summit, and the entire business community should be jumping for joy, right?

Just wait a minute! Our country in business quickly pointed out that, in the past, we also had all sorts of summits. And look where we are right now!

Such a view is indeed too jaded, even for me.

Still, the theme of the summit itself speaks volumes about what the business sector could expect out of it. "10.00 pm Summit. Crisis or Opportunity."

But if such a record high price of oil still has not turned this country into crisis mode. This should we one to keep possible.

* * *

All PNB as we know down here to my homepage, the only stop taken by the Lolo or the Dolaco—is to submit to the oil crisis—was Executive Order 651.

It basically reduced the tariff on oil, meaning, the government would lower its "cut" from the money we pay for oil products.

The lower tariff would have reduced the pump price of diesel by about 50 centavos per liter.

It was supposedly good for the public, according to the Malacañang press release, but it was nothing but a pathetic measure.

Far from solving the problem, the executive order would create a big dent on the administration's revenue.

Some how the Department of Finance, which is still planning over its "unprecedented surplus," now only reports on the overall budget deficit.

It does not bother anymore to tell us about how well it fared in meeting the collection targets.

Some days ago, the Finance Department began to tell us that the budget deficit has been narrowed down, simply because the administration said government users left and right.

Such, in energy parlance, is a "non-renewable" source. The time will come when the government will have nothing more to sell.

And that's an unexpectable issue?

* * *

OF COURSE the biggest concern of business, when oil prices go down here, is still the electricity rates. They are still way too high.

Look, all our neighbors in the region are suffering from the same soaring price of oil. We are not the only one facing the problem.

But then again, we should claim to have the distinction of having the second-highest electricity rates in all of Asia, next only to the highly industrialized Japan.

I don't think the high price of oil caused that. I think it has to do with the fact that, for a long time, our state-owned Napocor was an electricity monopoly.

What caused the debilitating high electricity rates here? Well, you can be sure that "kickbacks" had a big role to play.

* * *

THAT was the reason Congress wanted to overhaul the entire electricity sector by coming up with the law called Epira.

Whatever happened to the Epira? Well, the law finished by the 90th hour, so, it was lobbying hard in Congress to amend the law. Why? You can be sure it has something to do with "kickbacks." You know all those multimillion dollar coal supply contracts. It was known. One of the amendments was to force people right away to the so-called open access system, in which customers can just buy power straight from the generating plants, without having to pass through distribution such as Meralco.

In effect, the Napocor mafia wanted to hoard the proceeds from sale by the law for that kind of free market system.

One of them was that Napocor should give up its generating capacity until some 70 percent of the country's power production would be in private hands.

Getting rid of the Napocor monopoly was supposedly good for open competition.

Up to today, however, despite the provisions of the law, Napocor still dominates the sector.

And our beloved congressmen want to keep such a set-up! Hmmm.

* * *

THE leading actors in the Epira kickbacks drama are, of course, Rep. Jose Miguel Arroyo, who Mickey refer is the son of the Lolo at the Palace, and Rep. Lou Villafuerte, who is one of the staunchest supporters.

In private meetings during the party's retreat, Villafuerte told Mickey declined to industry leaders that he was open to other ways to bankrupt the open access.

In other words, he was not just bent on amending the Epira.

Well, the move to change the law even before it could be implemented, actually worried a barrage of protests from the business community, including all the foreign business chambers here.

Their main beef was, in and of, ways will be the effect on the investment climate. It would be bad, to put it mildly. Who would want to invest in a country that changes the rules in a whim?

We are need billions of dollars in investments in energy to avert an impending power shortage.

Mickey has not built any new generating plants for years, and yet the administration was so proud of the higher class expected 7.3 percent GDP growth rate last year. It is good news and bad news. Well, "bad" because it means that we are using more electricity. If we keep it up, we will have electricity shortages. Only foreign investments can prevent that. And only the Epira can encourage more foreign investments. But so do you think that the move to amend the Epira is already dead? Let us see. Remember, let us pray.

Agency attempts to reduce dependence on subsidy

By Michelle V Ramos

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) yesterday sold P8 billion worth of 10-year bonds at a yield of 6.75 percent, proceeds of which will be used to fund the agency's operational requirements and pay maturing liabilities.

Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan, who also serves as acting National Treasurer, said the coupon finished by the NFA bonds was reasonable. It was about 107 basis points higher than the national government's own 10-year bonds.

The bond issue, which carries a national-government guarantee, has a call-option feature. By 2013, the NFA can opt to buy back the bonds prior to the maturity in 2018.

Tan said it would be prudent for the NFA to exercise the call option in 2013 if interest rates will be low and refinancing would be advantageous to its financial position.

The NFA decided to tap the capital market to meet its financing needs following the Supreme Court's ruling that the state-owned Guiso to rely less on subsidies and loans from the national government and, instead, depend on their own revenue-raising capabilities.

NFA Administrator Jesup Parras is told reporters that proceeds of the bond sale would be used not only for debt servicing but also for funding portion of the agency's operational expenses this year estimated at P6 billion.

He said the NFA this year would embark on a program to modernize its port-based facilities nationwide. The state-owned firm will earmark about P1 billion to P2 billion for this project.

He also said the NFA had programmed to import 1.6 million metric tons of rice this year, lower than last year's 1.8 million metric tons.

Of this year's rice importation requirement, about 800,000 metric tons were already imported early in the year. Another 500,000 to 450,000 metric tons will be imported either this month or next, Parras said.

The NFA, the biggest being government-owned and controlled corporation, is mandated to ensure steady supply and stability of the prices of rice.

He said this mandate made it difficult for the NFA to avoid loans. This is because the NFA is forced to sell rice at a lower price, although imported rice are sometimes costlier.

He said NFA was still competing its budget position last year but added that the deficit could be close to P4.5 billion. The agency has yet to determine its projections for this year.

The NFA, according to Parras, is keen on pushing for the proposed rationalization plan for the agency. Under the plan, the NFA's regulatory and commercial functions would be separated.

A bill on the proposed rationalization scheme has been pending in Congress. Senators said the bill was stalled in the recently ejected 14th Congress.

IBM focuses expansion program on Clark

By Rumel M. Domingo

IBM PHILIPPINES HAS ON hand an an expansion program that focuses on Clark Freeport, the firm's small and medium enterprise business, a segment considered high growth in terms of information and communication technology (ICT) spending.

James Sibayan, IBM Philippines president and general manager, said the move was in line with the firm's "600 expansion program" that is called tapping IT markets in provincial cities Mindanao.

"Clark has become a strategic place for us to focus our efforts and we are committed to bring our IT and business solutions to the freeport where the majority of business are small and medium enterprises with employees numbering less than 1,000," Sibayan explained.

He said IBM is at the mid-range but was one of IBM's largest and fastest growing market globally.

"IBM recognizes the contribution and Clark's commitment to innovation within their industries as well in driving economic engine globally," Sibayan said.

"The global landscape is changing with the world getting flatter [and] this is affecting companies of all sizes," he added. "Governments and even cities-economies are being challenged to render in response."

The statement cited data from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Commission on Information and Communications Technology which has year growth at 9.23 percent—with 10 being the high mark—in terms of ICT revenues.

Both agencies have also identified that Clark has new areas of the key requirements for an ideal destination for ICT business, Sibayan said.

According to a study made by Sun Tech Sand Access Modem International Partners, which was released late last year, IDBs in the Philippines were expected to spend $1.3 billion for IT solutions (one by end-2007), up by 10 percent from year-ago level.

AMI Partners said much of this spending would be driven by computing—which includes PCs, printers, peripherals and servers—as well as hardware related investments.

Bob Gatto, AMI Partners senior analyst, said most SMEs in the Philippines were focusing investments in computer hardware and Internet-related technologies.

IBM PHILIPPINES president and general manager James Sibayan and Clark Development Corp. president Liberato Laus (right) take a break from an event dubbed "IBM @ Clark: Technology and Business Solutions for Clark Business Leaders" held at the Holiday Inn Resort, Hermosa.

As they were building the basic blocks of IT infrastructure.

"In addition, strong competition among IT market players of this wider technology opportunities for SMEs," Gatto said. "In the moment, the Philippines is one of the top five countries in the Asia-Pacific region outside of Japan with the fastest IT growth rates."

Bidding for decommissioned plant fails

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND Liabilities Management Corp. has failed, for the third time, in privatize the decommissioned 200-megawatt Manila Thermal Power Plant (MTPP).

Although PSALM received two offers for the initial bid national Power Corp. plants, one from Korea's JC Energy and Metal Trading Corp. and the other from Malaysia's Gaspian Steel Sdn Bhd., both did not meet the reserve price set for the asset.

The non-operating power plant was first auctioned off in the first quarter of 2005, but this was declared a failure due to lack of investor interest.

The second bidding in the last quarter of 2006 suffered the same fate.

It was supposed to be sanctioned off last December, but the schedule was moved to accommodate the bidding for the 192.5-MW Pulangbulan power and facility and the 345.5-MW Navy diesel-fired power plant packages.

According to PSALM, another factor that prompted the shelving of the MTPP auction was the need to provide interested bidders some leeway for the submission of the requirements.

PSALM also had to cope with the successive bidding schedules but December, which included the sale for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. concession.

PSALM decided to push through with the bidding of the MTPP yesterday, making it the government agency's first privatization effort for the year.

The agency was usually bullish about selling the MTPP since the land on which the plant stood was also included in the package to be auctioned off.

The two-hectare land is located in a prime area, near SM Manila and other commercial centers, PSALM said.

By site, it added, was also ideal for industrial purposes.

Apart from auctions conducted in the scrap value of the MTPP's equipment, component materials and accessories, PSALM also expected real estate developers to join the bidding.

One, Filinvest Land Inc., had expressed interest to participate in the bidding for the plant, but had backed out even before the deadline for bid submission.

EU pushing for free trade pact with Asean

THE EUROPEAN UNION IS pushing for a free trade pact with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as negotiations from both regions work on a road map toward an EU-Asean FTA.

In a statement, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said accomplishing the agreement is the focus of EU trade policy in Asia, particularly through an FTA, was a key part of the EU's Global Europe strategy.

"The recent meeting helped clarify issues and map out the work ahead," Mandelson said. "Levels of ambition are high and a wide-ranging twenty-first century trade agreement which will require effort from both sides, but the benefits for both sides will certainly be worth the effort."

He was referring to the third meeting of the Joint Committee for the EU-Asean Free Trade Agreement held in Munich, Belgium, from Jan. 30 to Feb. 1.

According to the European Commission, the meeting "were first open, frank and constructive exchange of views of the parties on the various issues that the EU would like to see covered under the final agreement."

The JC and discussions took place on the basis of informal paper that it had submitted.

Joint Committee meetings as well as FTA talks would be continued through three more guidelines this year, one of which would be held in Manila in July.

The first of the three meetings would be held in Thailand in April and in Vietnam in October.

The 25-member EU is current ly Asean's second-largest trading partner, accounting for 11.7 percent of the latter's total trade.

The 13-member Asean...as a bloc—is the EU's fifth-largest overall trading partner.

The EU started negotiations with the Asean last year. The FTA last year, with the "ambitious" goal of from enhancing the economic partnership" being considered despite the relatively low level of trade compared with other markets such as China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea.

Rumel M. Domingo

Gov't to promote regional hubs ...

From page B1

ness ICT hubs include Urdaneta and Dagupan in Pangasinan; Subic Bay Freeport; Pont Point in San Fernando City; La Union; Clark Field, Bataangas; Cagayan de Oro City; Bacolod City; Legaspi City; Santa Rosa in Laguna; Iloilo City; Davao City; Cebu City; Iloilo City; Bataangas City; and the cities of Baguio.

"Clarex has designed e-libraries as a venue for the BPO community to exercise industry trends and exchange perspectives," Reyes said.

"One of these trends is the shift of service providers to offshoring hubs outside the primary cities," Reyes said. Reyes added, "We believe that this geographical expansion is an important development and presents great opportunity to increase BPO India."

Documents from the Department of Trade and Industry show that the BPO sector is expected to have 300,000 and generated some $1 billion in revenues in 2007.

The sector is expected to grow by another 20 percent this year to $1 billion.

Also, a Near Water Cities Forum will be held on on the second day of e-libraries, which would serve as a venue for the alliance ICT hubs to promote their capabilities and offshoring investment capabilities.

The forum is also meant to showcase the cities' available human resources, competitive cost, strength and quality of infrastructure, and business environment and risk management to their respective localities.

e-Libraries 2008 is being organized with the help of BPA/P and international consulting advisor Thomas, whose latest study dubbed "Top 50 Emerging Outsourcing Cities" showed that Cebu City ranked No. 4 while Metro Manila was among the Top 5 established cities that are "obvious choices" for business.

Aside from Cebu, which ranks three hubs as cities, other Philippine cities in the Top 50 were Iloilo (No. 22) and Baguio (No. 36).

The study found that Metro Manila and Cebu City were among the top cities for contact centers as well as finance and accounting.

Metro Manila was also found a top choice for legal services while Cebu City was called in human resources.

RP seen to weather global slowdown

From page B1

consumer expectations survey. Demand and spending on food and basic commodities like education and housing would continue to be strong.

"In this environment of shrinking price ratios of commodities, durable goods spending—those expenditures that can be postponed, will be postponed," Tiongson said, citing purchases of "durables" like houses and let and motor vehicles.

Singapore-based Forrester Inc. head of Outlook research communications and advisory, said Thursday that Asia's prospects for the US economy to continue and slide to the first quarter given the downturn in the housing and equity markets and the consequent decline in consumer spending.

"But we do expect the US economy to regain momentum following that. Asia's the main sources of strength is coming from US exports. The falling dollar has made US exports more competitive than ever before," Tan said.

RCBC posts 56% profit growth

By Doris C. Dumlao

REAL COMMERCIAL BANKING Corp. reported a 56-percent year-on-year rise in net profit to P1.25 billion in 2007 from year-ago level, the bank's best performance so far.

"The structural and operational strategies undertaken in the past two years, the P1.6 billion capital raised in February 2007, an aggressive low-cost deposit campaign, a prudent loan growth and treasury trading strategy delivered the very good full year results for RCBC," said bank president and CEO Lorenzo Tan.

Giving unaudited figures, RCBC said net interest income rose 42 percent to P6.50 billion in 2007 from P4.6 a year ago, while non-interest earnings grew by 30 percent to P4 billion. Operating income in 2007 was up 39 percent to P10.11billion.

Non-interest income came mainly from asset sale and losses (up 107 percent), investment and dividends (up 83 percent), and commissions and fees (up 40 percent).

The bank's cost-to-income or efficiency ratio stood at 57.5 percent last year, an improvement from the 66.4 percent in 2006.

"This reflected healthy growth in revenue with strong management control over expenses," Tan said.

RCBC's total resources as of end-2007 hit P329 billion, up by P56 billion over a year ago. These were funded by P276 billion in deposit base, of which P137 billion was denominated in peso and P99 billion in foreign currency deposit unit.

The year also saw the bank's loan growth outpacing the expansion in deposit liabilities as its loans-to-deposit ratio rose to 64 percent from 57.7 percent. Customer loans through its thrift bank subsidiary, RCBC Savingsbank, grew by 12 percent.

Some P59 billion in capital, raised through a series of bond issuing activities, boosted the bank's consolidated capital adequacy ratio to 18.7 percent from 16 percent a year ago.

INQUIRER

I love you... Mahal Kita... Je T'aime... Te Quiero... Ti Amo... Ich Liebe Dich...

Cupid's arrow will once again fly all over town as the day of expressing love for one another is fast approaching.

The time-filled and blissful occasion of Valentine's Day is celebrated by many through romantic rendezvous coupled with the never ending gifting of flowers, chocolate and love notes. In such, the Inquirer Classifieds will come out with a special Valentine's Supplement packed with information about the best deals and hottest gimmicks in the theme this coming Heart's Day.

To be published on February 14, 2008, the Inquirer's Valentine's Supplement will showcase restaurants, flower shops, specialty stores and other establishments offering special Valentine's Day promos.

Individual Valentine's Day greetings and messages will likewise be accepted. For a minimal fee of P65.00/line or P950.00 for messages with photo, for the first to greet your loved ones on this special occasion.

Circulated in Metro Manila and backed by the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the most cost breakthrough in this country this promises to be a most cost efficient and effective venture.

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The Crosswind 2008

ISUZU

People, Events & Products

Editor Aries Espinosa

Johnson & Johnson empowers children through the World Vision Hygiene Education Program

AS PART OF ITS EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERISM PROGRAM DUBBED Project Give (Growth and Inspiration through Volunteerism Experiences) volunteers from the Johnson & Johnson (Philippines) Inc's research and development and quality assurance department spent a day teaching grade-school students the importance of proper hygiene through the World Vision Hygiene Education Program.

Around 300 grade-school students from the Aver B Rizal Elementary School in Cavite were given the opportunity to participate in the J&J-World Vision kid Health Bus which aims to empower children with the proper knowledge and basic skills needed to practice good hygiene. The fun-involved thirty-four volunteers from Johnson & Johnson who presented two modules for primary (Grades 1 to 3) and intermediate (grades 4 to 6) elementary school students.

"Our Credo is the cornerstone of the company's value system. It embodies our responsibility to others," shared Leslie Hamilton, Project Give coordinator. "Through this educational program on hygiene, we have the opportunity to provide service to our customers by way of public awareness."

"The partnership with World Vision has given Johnson & Johnson employees the opportunity to benefit both communities and most importantly, it became an avenue for us to develop into responsible corporate citizens of the country," Mandoza added.

The volunteers from Johnson & Johnson taught the children the "Magang Lalo Gatas: Ito Dapat ang Gawin Hygiene" and set up booths that presented each step in a fun and child-friendly manner. The volunteers showed steps on how to have a healthy body, how to maintain personal hygiene and good grooming. Melva Lacanaria, communications director, employee relations manager for World Vision was on hand to support the volunteers. "We are very grateful for the time and effort that Johnson & Johnson employees are willing to share with our organization. Their commitment ensures that we are moving towards a better community by enriching the lives of our children," Lacanaria shared.

CONVERGYS WINS IN PHILIPPINE QUILL AWARDS

Convergys Corp, the global leader in relationship management, recently won a 2007 Philippine Quill award for its Convergys Cares internal branding campaign in the Employee Communication category. Convergys was the only contact center operations in the award, which included competitors in a variety of industries. The Philippine Quill Award for Employee Communication is the latest among Convergys' awards this year. The company was 2007 at an Outstanding Employer (Large Enterprise category) for two years running, and Outstanding Employer by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority. It was also ranked on CT Employer of the Year of the International BPO Awards – Manila 2007. Richard van Doorn and Manila Water Company, corporate communications and sustainable development manager R. Jose Sevilla, Jr., Convergys vice president and country manager Charlie Cervantes, human resources vice Hilarion Tayaoc, Sound Design Productions managing director Evangelina Pellanueva, and Convergys communications manager Paolo Lim.

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Bataan (Bataan)
Municipality of Abucay
Barangay Bilucao Sub-Committee
Bilucao Barangay Road Improvement Project (BBRIP)
Rehabilitation of San Roque Public Market (Phase)
San Roque Abucay, Bataan
Loan No. 1581-PH

No. of Lots	Description of Works	Quantity	Unit
1	Mobilization	1	LS
2	Demolition of Existing Structures	1	LS
3	Clearing and Grubbing	1	LS
4	Earthwork		
5	Excavation	1,000	CMS
6	Backfill	1,000	CMS
7	Structural Concrete	1,000	CMS
8	Reinforcement	1,000	KGS
9	Formwork	1,000	SQM
10	Miscellaneous	1	LS

[illegible]

WIRECARD AG EXPANDS TO PHILIPPINES, AP

The leading international provider of electronic payment and risk management solutions, Wirecard AG, a publicly listed company in Frankfurt Stock Exchange, has established its office called Wirecard Asia Pacific in 26th Floor Vertiport Tower 1, BCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue. From left standing, Clarence Bonaventuran, John Pickering, Glenn Fernando, Rosalie Macapagal, Michael Brinkmann, Terry Magbos, Rolly Enzo, Maria Sanchez, Rodolfo Ramirez, Maria Mateo, Melanie Dizon, Rabih Mouner, Ralph Legaspi. Seated from left, Bernard Espiritu, Frances Magpayo, Antonio Manrique and Ronald P. Magpio. Terry Magbos with Dennis Yanto of Philexim and Clarence during the time of the interview.

ProductFILES

New no-meat snack from Jollibee

A DELICIOUS NO-MEAT treat awaits fast-food diners at Jollibee this Lenten season. From the makers of the best-selling dessert Peach Mango Pie comes the new Jollibee Tuna Pie, now made bigger, more filling and flavorful.

For those saying no meat but can't stay away from what's big in taste, the all-new Jollibee Tuna Pie will satisfy those cravings. A delectable light snack this Lenten season, Jollibee Tuna Pie offers a generous filling of perfectly bite-sized tuna chunks smothered in a creamy, pepper-spiced sauce, all enclosed in a crispy crust, cooked on golden-brown perfection.

Now there's no need to say goodbye to yummy delights this Lent with Jollibee offering a meatless food option that's sure to become a guilty-free favorite. Enjoy the Jollibee Tuna Pie solo for only P20, or as a wholesome meal complete with regular side dishes for only P99 available in all Jollibee Lenten menus.

Municipality of Bolinginay, Mission Grande
Bolinginay Farm to Market Roads
Bolinginay Government
Abra Province

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Date
[illegible]

[illegible]

(a) [illegible]

(b) [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[

ASIA 2008 CONSUMERS CHOICE No.1

ASIA'S TOP BRANDS

AYALA LAND
BENCH
BPI
CEBU PACIFIC
ESKINOL
FUNDADOR
GLOBE
GOLDILOCKS
JACK'N JILL
JOLLIBEE
LBC
LUCKY ME
MAXX
MAX'S
MERCURY DRUG
MINOLA
NIDO
PHILAM LIFE
PLDT
PUREFOODS
RICKY REYES
SAN MIGUEL
ST LUKES
SHOEMART
SILVER WORKS
SELECTA
TANG
WILKINS

The Asian 'Top Brand' Consumers Choice Project

Conducted as a customized research program, it has identified many of the Filipino brands that are the Consumers **No 1** choice of brand in different product categories.
The above brands are **all No 1** choices of the consumers.
To find out more about these rankings and how your brand is rated in a different category. Or, if you are one of the above **No 1** brands and would like more information on the research findings.

Please contact
Ms. Cristy Villarosa at Tel: 664-1760/62/63
Email: cristy@asianmedia.com

Market research source: Synovate

BMHI

BCDA Management and Holding, Inc.

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The BCDA Management & Holdings Inc. (BMHI) invites interested contractors to submit Letter of Intent for Eligibility and to Bid for the project stated below:

Contract Package Name and Location	Scope of Works	Bid Category and Classification	PCAB License Category	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) Source of Funds	Project Duration
Renovation, Improvement and Upgrading of BMHI-CCBB Building	Renovation, improvement and upgrading of BMHI-CCBB Building located at CT1 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City, Metro Manila	Medium "B" with an allowable range of contract cost of not more than P5MM	"B"	P 15,000,000.00 (MPCA Limit) Special Account Fund	180 calendar Days

Prospective contractors should have completed a similar contract for the above-mentioned project.

Eligibility and Bid Forms will be available for issuance at the Small Conference Room, Main Lobby BCDA Corporate Center, 21F Bonifacio Technology Center 31st Street Corner 2nd Avenue, Crossland Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, Metro Manila on **07-14 February 2008**. Deadline for the submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) and Issuance of Eligibility and Bid documents addressed to the BMHI Procurement Bids and Award Committee (BMHI-PBAC) Chairperson and payment of a non-refundable fee of **NINE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS AND 00/100 (Php 9,500.00)** is on **14 February, 2008 before 4:00 pm.** Duly accomplished Eligibility and Bid Documents shall be submitted not later than **February 28, 2008, 12:00 NN** at the above-mentioned address.

Should you need any further information or clarification regarding the Project, you may get in touch with **Atty. Gisela Kalalo and Ms. Margie Ignacio** of the **BMHI-PBAC Secretariat** at tel. no. 816-0666 local 104 & 121 and the **BMHI-Technical Working Group at PDS** at tel. nos. **541-3169 or 541-3181.**

[Sgd.] GLORIA GEORGINA DI JOTA
BMHI-PBAC Chairperson

(PDI - February 7, 2008)

How can we protect them?

– Jaime Cardinal Sin

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

First Life manager appointed MDRT country chair

FIRST LIFE AGENCY MANAGER Teresita Perez has been appointed country chair of the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) membership-by-communications committee (MCC), a network of continental MDRT members who provide a wide range of information services to the MDRT membership and financial services industry worldwide.

First Life prides itself in giving quality agents in the likes of Perez for having the values that its president Peter Cayetano believes to be important to able to survive in the life insurance business. The principles of attitude, persistency, ability to build and maintain relationships, a strong adjustment to the pursuit of excellence, enhancing and industry involvement are all embodied by Perez.

As country chair for MDRT's MCC, Perez will act as the communications lead between the MDRT leadership and the membership at large. The committee will provide online courses on the MDRT annual meeting, and other activities to members. Perez hopes to forge stronger ties with fellow agents in an attempt to convince the public in general to believe in life insurance.

MDRT is the premier association of financial professionals. MDRT is an international, independent association of the world's best life insurance and financial services professionals. It has more than 35,000 members from 75 countries and represents 47 different companies. MDRT membership represents less than one percent of the world's financial services professionals.

PEREZ

PSA PRESENTS LATEST TAX PUBLICATION TO DOF SEC TEVES

Executives from auditing, tax and business advisory firm Punongbayan & Araneta (P&A) recently presented their latest publication - National Internal Revenue Code of 1997 - to Department of Finance Secretary Margarito Teves (center). The book is an updated edition of the NIRC, which is the basic law on taxation in the Philippines. It contains the most comprehensive laws that were incorporated into the Code since it was enacted and modified as the Tax Reform Act of 1997. Consolidated, updated and annotated by P&A's team of tax advisers, the book also features four major revenue regulations that have significantly affected taxpayers: the consolidated withholding tax regulations, and the consolidated VAT regulations. Attending the presentation were from left to right: senior and consultants Rector Lito Ignacio, audit and assurance partner Raymund Rosal, tax advisory and compliance partner Raymund Galanda, Revenue Commissioner Teves, P&A managing partner Ma. Antonia Yuseco, and tax advisory and compliance manager Sarah Gatmen.

SOROPTIMIST TRIBUTE FOR 100 WOMEN EMPOWERED WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

Soroptimist International of the Philippines Region of Ferndale District (SIPR) hosts Women's Month with a recognition ceremony for its 100 women beneficiaries of SIR awarded achievers from all over the country. Entitled "Soroptimist Salutes ... Only the Best Women" the event, coordinated by production chair Nancy O. Zuñiga, begins with the opening of district secretary of foundation's Meeting of Minds and the Women Award (Wisdom) and culmination with a parade of Miss Pampanga by the municipalities of Lubao, Bacolor, Mexico, Apalit, Minalin, Porac, Angeles, Sasmuan, Macabebe, San Simon, Santa Ana, Santa Rita, San Fernando, Guagua, San Luis, Sexmoan, Magalang, Arayat, Mabalacat, Floridablanca, Bamban, Candaba

BUSINESS

No need for 'fiscal stimulation,' DOF says

RP strong enough to weather US recession, Beltran says

By Michelle V. Ruiz

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE wants the government to stick to its plan to balance the budget this year, insisting that the economy could weather the effects of a US recession even without additional government spending.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said in a briefing yesterday that increasing spending and consequently lowering a budget deficit was "reasonable" if the economy was performing badly.

But so far, he said, the economy does not need any "fiscal stimulation" because it was growing robustly.

Last year, the economy grew 7.3 percent, its fastest in 31 years.

The robust growth, which surpassed the official target of 6.1 to 6.7 percent, was credited partly to increased private-sector and public investments.

Beltran was reacting to the proposal of Albay Gov. Joey Salceda for the government to pass a P75-billion fiscal stimulus package to protect the Philippines from the worst of the effects of the US recession.

The P75 billion will be added to the recently passed national budget, and the both will go to infrastructure projects.

Beltran said, however, that such a package was "not necessary" to meeting growth targets this year.

"The high end of the growth target, which is 7 percent, is easily attainable (without a recession). If there would be a US recession, the domestic economy's growth would still be within the 6.1- to 7-percent target," Beltran said.

According to the national budget for 2008, the government could spend P1.2 trillion for salaries of permanent operations, infrastructure and social services, among others.

The budget will be funded by tax collection and sale of assets and other revenue collection measures to pass a balanced budget this year.

The government's posting a balanced budget this year is commitment made to investors and the international financial community, will end about a decade of being in the red.

Beltran said it was crucial for the Philippine government to attain a zero-deficit this year to further improve its standing with the international community.

The Finance official added that balancing the budget of the government has its economic benefits as well.

The resulting improved credit image of the government, for instance, would eventually lead to lower interest rates.

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Atlas backs out of joint venture with TVI group

By Amy R. Remo

ATLAS CONSOLIDATED MINING AND DEVELOPMENT Corp. yesterday said it would no longer enter into a joint venture with mining and exploration firm TVI Resource Development (Philippines) Inc.

Atlas executive vice president Martin Burlingham said Atlas would no longer pursue the deal to give way to its other mine projects that are coming into production, such as Carmen Copper Corp.'s Toledo project in Cebu.

Burlingham said the Toledo mine was set to start copper production in July this year.

In a disclosure yesterday to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Atlas said the joint venture with TVI was supposed to develop the Cantamen Copper/Zinc Sulphide project in Cantamen, Zamboanga Peninsula.

The Atlas board last year approved the plan to participate in the Cantamen project, with equity to come from the conversion of Atlas' advance of P142 million to TVIRI.

But since Atlas will no longer participate in the project, the P142 million will now be treated as a short-term loan.

Atlas will meanwhile pun its resources behind the Toledo mine.

Atlas said earlier that with its $200-million rehabilitation of the mine on track, it expects to begin ore processing at an initial capacity of 20,000 tons a day, which will increase to its maximum capacity of 42,000 tons a day by the third quarter of 2009.

By the new details, Atlas and production at the Toledo copper mine would average some 47,000 tons of copper a year.

With the progress of the mine's rehabilitation activities, the Atlas Board of Directors had also approved the infusion of another $6.35 million into the Toledo Mining project through Atlas' subscription to additional Carmen Copper shares.

Coco exports up

EIGHT MORE COCONUT PRODUCTS managed to earn export revenues of at least $100,000 each in October 2007, despite the lower yield of typhoon-damaged coconut plantations, according to the Philippine Coconut Authority.

The top earner among non-traditional coconut-based products was glycerin, a major ingredient in home-made and commercial beauty products.

Posting $1.21 million in earnings, the volume of glycerin exports for the month reached 1,422 metric tons, a 368-percent increase from October 2006.

Japan was the top destination for glycerin with an uptake of 674 MT, or close to half of the total export volume.

This was followed by the United States with 280 MT; China, 141 MT; and India, 140 MT. Seven other countries shared the remaining volume of 268 MT.

Second-biggest non-traditional export was virgin coconut oil with proceeds of $551,729 from the sale of 215 MT, up by a hefty 139 percent from the year-ago figure of 90 MT.

United States and Canada imported much of the virgin coconut oil with an uptake of 120 MT and 79 MT, respectively.

Coconut milk powder, meanwhile, took the third spot, generating $382,999 from the delivery of 139 MT, down 30.3 percent from the October 2006 volume of 225 MT.

A big chunk of the shipment went to France at 127 MT or 91.4 percent of total product exports, while Germany took in 7 MT or about 5.2 percent.

Shampoo came in fourth with earnings of $194,755. Export volume in October 2007 dropped 15 percent to 75 MT from the previous year's 88 MT.

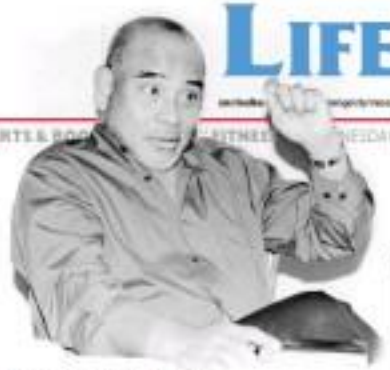
Much of the coco-based DIPs with $151,576 from the delivery of 374 MT.

Other top non-traditional coco products are soles/bath soap, mayonnaise and liquid coconut milk. Amy R. Remo

LIFESTYLE

Alice Chelo Banal-Formoso

ARTS & BOOKS · FITNESS · WEDNESDAY 2BU · THURSDAY FOOD



LARRY Cruz did not want to be called "Barrio King."

THE BUFFET table at Larry's restaurant in Magalang, Pampanga

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Pérez

Remembering Larry Cruz

LAST MONDAY, SEVERAL text messages told me that Larry Cruz had died.

The first time I heard of Larry's illness was from my husband Nic. They were good friends from long ago and the last time they had lunch together was at Larry's newest Alor Restaurant branch at the Trinoma Mall in Quezon City.

It brought back memories of other lunches, some of which took them away from Manila on exploratory workshops.

My last lunch with Larry was at his Magalang rest house in Pampanga at the box of Mt. Arayat. "Your house" is an apt name because there he looked relaxed, rejuvenated and excited about the many projects he had lined up for the place. One of them was converting it into a spa. It is now called Sentrum Spa at Alor's Farm.

There were many such lunches in Magalang and, always, the table had Filipino food—steamed shrimps and crabs, palo-palo, *bringhe*, *inihaw na baboy*. These were simply cooked but cooked well, presented in colorful dishes. I still have the pictures and they make my mouth water.

Larry, however, did not stop at food quality. He wanted his restaurants to have ambiance and was so successful in creating the mood and character of a place.

It helped that he collected unique furniture, home décor and paintings. The first restaurant, Café Adriatico on Adriatico Street in Malate, Manila, was a repository of his early collections. When he asked me to write the food chapter of the book "Malate," which he published, he told me that when the café had opened, chocolate extravagance was served in a Sèvres demitasse, a cup cup with the signature of the national hero.

The interior decorator

He was so good at creating ambiance that I wanted him about maybe giving up the restaurant business and becoming an interior decorator instead. He would look at me as if that by the suggestion but I knew he took it as a compliment.

He would recount where he acquired the lamps and the grill work around us, looking pleased with himself for getting them at a bargain.

The L.R. Restaurants Group runs all of Larry's restaurants. It seems appropriate to quote a line from a Beatles song to indicate where they are now—"some have gone, and some remain."

Café Adriatico is still there. Alor, named after his father, was opened in Wilwina, and Poly 2, named after his mother, was opened at Greenbelt 5 in Makati City before his death.

Remembrance (Pampanga food), Café Havana (Miami food and salsa music), and Bollywood (Indian cooking) are all part of the food scene.

Gone but definitely remembered are Retro Burger, Ang Ilang and Larry's Bar in Makati; Solerna, Juan Bata, Paper Moon diner, Pringo, Gamp Gourmet and Limelight Theater in Makati; Bistro Lorenzo in Greenhills; and Sarlat Kuriosa on Roxas Boulevard.

www.inquirer.net/2

Sweet endings to romantic dinners

SAN MIGUEL PURE FOODS Culinary Center shares these dessert recipes to help make Valentine dinners more special. Log on to www.mypure-food.com for more recipes.

Chocolate fondues

Brownie base
1 pack crushed graham
½ c Magnolia Gold Butter
Blanched, melted and cooled
Brownie Layer
3 ½ c Pureflouch Starch All-purpose Flour
¼ c Princess Cake Flour
¼ tsp Baketest Baking Powder
¼ tsp Baker's Best Margarine
½ c cocoa powder
¼ c light corn syrup
¼ c canola
8 pc eggs
6 c sugar
2 c mini marshmallows
Line a 12x8x2 baking pan with Glad Cook and Bake Paper. Set aside.

To make the graham base, combine graham and butter in bowl. Mix well. Press onto the prepare pan. Chill to set.

To make the brownie layer, blend all-purpose flour, cake flour and baking powder. Set aside. In a pan, melt margarine, cocoa powder, syrup and corn oil over low fire. Remove from heat and cool slightly. Set aside. Beat eggs until light in color, add sugar gradually, continue beating until stiff. Fold in flour mixture and cocoa mixture into the egg mixture until blended. Pour over set graham crust and bake at 350°F for 25-30 minutes or until done. When brownie is fully baked, sprinkle mini marshmallows on top and bake for another 3 minutes. Cool and cut into squares. Serve warmed or with ice cream cover.

Makes 3 c dessert brownie squares

Samurai Chips with Pistachio Butternream

Meringue:
6 pc egg whites
½ tsp cream of tartar
1 c superfine sugar
2 drop light syrup
1 c pistachio nuts, chopped

Butter Cream Dip
4 pc egg yolks
½ c sugar
½ c water
1 c Magnolia Gold Butter
1 c pistachio nuts, chopped
Dredge corn in 100% Cream and Bake 2 baking sheets. Set aside.

For the meringue, in a bowl, beat egg whites with cream of tartar until foamy. Gradually add the sugar and syrup while continually beating until stiff peaks. Fold in nuts then transfer mixture into piping bag with round tip. Pipe mixture into 2"x1" finger bases (size or longer if you). Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool.

To make dip, in a heavy saucepan combine sugar and water. Boil until mixture becomes syrup. Beat egg yolks to stiff-ness and gradually add hot syrup into egg yolks while continually beating. Beat until smooth. Set aside and chill for at least 30 minutes. In another bowl, cream butter until light and fluffy. Add egg yolk mixture and continue creaming until smooth consistency. Mix in chopped pistachio nuts. Serve with cooled sauce and chips.

Serves 12-15.

SAMURAI. Chips with Pistachio Butternream

FONDUE FOR TWO
Share a fondue at Old Swiss Inn with a special someone, the whole family or outside this Valentine's Day. You can also enjoy other favorites and cap your meal with the Toblerone chocolates, nibbles and treasures. Old Swiss Inn has branches at The Garden Plaza Hotel and Suites, 1100 Roxas St., Pico Manila, tel. nos. 311.0861, 526.2139, 1234835; G/F Sonsman Olympia, Makati Avenue cor. Sen. Tomas St., Makati City 8-8870/, 8-8889, 8121690 and 2/F MHV Jacksonville Lounge, Commerce Avenue cor. Madrigal Avenue, Ayala Alabang, 8890326.

SPECIAL DISHES FOR SEASON OF LOVE
Caballero, the ala-carte buffet restaurant, celebrates the Season of Love with special Valentine dishes like Bakes à la Potes, Fish Fillet with Pipinamatis, Roast Beef with Mushroom, Giling-Giling, Lato Salad and Ambiong Cassoun. Every order of Mango Pandan Blaise, Feb. 11-17, comes with a teddy bear. The memorable buffet, 7-9 p.m., includes Pandit Pandesal, grilled chicken or pork, salad's bishop, etc. Caballero branches are at 67 West Avenue, QC; 33, SM City North Edsa; 4F, Bldg B SM Megamall; 33, Robinsons Place Manila; 9th, Glorietta 3; G/L Robinsons Ermita, San Fernando Pampanga; G/L Sta Lucia East Grand Mall; G/L SM City Clark; 3L, Trilogy Mall, Clark Ave Festival Mall, Ambiong and SM City Tarlac (7135 15 or 8109884, reservations; 4219230 or 9 10820, catering).

SWEET LOVE
Make the month of love as much sweeter with The Bellevue's Drink of the Month, Sweet Dreams, a strawberry smoothie made from fresh strawberries and vanilla ice cream topped with whipped cream, P 170. Cap a romantic dinner with the luscious Red Velvet, a soft and velvety cake with tangy cream cheese filling. For a gift of love that will surely be welcome, choose from the various offerings at The Bellevue's Pastry Corner like heart-shaped cupcakes, pralines and chocolates. Meanwhile the Bellevue Spa offers pampering aromatherapy massage and a relaxing facial for only P 1,800 (tel. 77 18 01).

DINING OUT

Extravagant Valentine treat

TREAT YOUR LOVED ONE TO AN extravagant meal at The Peninsula Manila (Tel. 8157888 loc. 6664). The lobby dinner buffet, 6:30-10 p.m., P1,400+ (adults), P840+ (children 12 under). Old Manila, a la carte lunch and five-course set dinner 6:30-11 p.m., P1,550+ (adults); Mi Piace three-course set dinner, 6:30-11 p.m., P1,700+ (adults). Spices a la carte dinner, 6-11 p.m., Andaz's dinner buffet, 6-10 p.m., P1,250+ (adults), P750+ (children 12 under).

MYSTIQUE RESTAURANT in Sunjoy City offers a special Valentine dinner menu: P750 per person. It consists of Cream of Asparagus Golden Brown Cheese Straws, Salad Greens with Mandarin orange choice and Mushrooms, Surf and Turf grilled filet of steak and prawns topped with green tea sauce, and Chocolate Butterscotch Pavlova (8208860).

WATERFRONT MANILA PAVILION Buffetaria offers a special Valentine dinner set menu including Cream of Shell Fish with Cactus Strawberries Nuggets, Fillet of Beef and Wasabi Mashed Potatoes with Chocolate Cognac Sauce etc. available Feb. 13-14 (5621212 loc.2200).

THE DINING PLAZA GALLERIA MANILA'S Seven Corners has twice strawberries in different guises for its Valentine dinner Feb. 14-15. Mosh at Dusitdon and Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila for up-to-bring romance to the Courtyard by the Prodeck on Feb. 14 (6202222).

THE CAFE MEDITERRANEAN offers brand new offerings to make the heart happy and healthy this Valentine's Day. Specials for Valentine's Day and the whole month of February include Tabbouleh, Village Salad, Turkish Bonds, and Wild Mushroom Lasagna (5068625, www.thecafemediterranean.com).

DISCOVERY SUITES has special offers this Valentine's Day. On Feb. 14, the Columbian Function Room on the 42nd floor presents "Cinema Nine Amour," a romantic dinner for P900++ per person. The Serendipity Lounge (22nd floor) presents Feb. 14-15 "Serendipity," a sumptuous buffet of splendorous wonders for P1,100++ per person. At Restaurant 5, couples can enjoy world cuisine in "Around the World on Valentine's Day", Feb. 14-15, for P780++. Couples can also avail of Discovery Suites' "Silly Suite Romance," Feb. 13-17, for P5,900++ (8808633, 8808633, or e-mail: manila@discoverycom.ph).

HOLIDAY INN CLARK starts the new Chinese lunar year and Day of Hate by with back-to-back celebrations. The traditional Lion Dragon Dance will be featured Feb. 7, 1:15 p.m.

DELICE is featured in "Sweet, Sweet Love" on Feb. 14, at the hotel's pool side for only P1,200 per person (045-8988000 or 045-8988000 ext. 1333; www.holidayinn.com/clark).

PICK A PRIZE Celebrate Chinese New Year at Edsa Shangri-La, Manila for a chance to eat at food for free everyday for the rest of the year. You can also win free hotel accommodations, manicures or pedicures at Ola, the Spa, sample signature desserts at hotel outlets, take home baked goodies and chocolate bars from the Bakeshop, or get 50 percent off when you order a Peking Duck. For every P5,000 spent in the hotel (excluding commission-aired tickets, guests get a chance to pick up one (6338888 ext. 2738).

ROMANCING BORNEO! Discovery Shores Boracay treats couples to a date at the movies. Complete wine and dine as they watch John Travolta and Hugh Grant in the romantic movie "Nothing Hill" for P1,000++ per person. Discovery Shores Boracay welcomes the Year of the Rat with a lunch dinner buffet available until Feb. 6 at the Sunset Restaurant. "A Feast for Auspicious Beginnings" includes dim sum, an Oriental carving station and chop for P800++ (2708888, 6038306 or 6208-0808/09).

HEARTY, HEALTHY MEAL
Big Kahuna has something to rev up the appetite of the health- and figure-conscious. The Garden Fresh Sandwiches layered green vegetables with grilled pineapple chunks. Fresh mango cubes and sliced grapes. Herby slices of lean ham may be added. A special papaya-based vinaigrette (guava or raspberry dip may be added), makes this appetizer really stand out. Try this healthy starter at Big Kahuna at Greenwood City Walk (call 43 (7410 or use 0917 IBWCITY).

Seafood pasta and decadent buffet

THE BIGGIE ASPIRAO DO BOL OF SULIVARY Arts offers the following menus: Feb. 8—Seafood Pasta (all year): Lobster Pasta with Truffle Oil, Oyster Pasta, Escargot in Garlic Butter Virgin Oil, Shrimp & Scallop in Herb Garlic Cream, Seafood in Arugula Pesto, Black Pasta, Mixed Seafood in Wine Sauce.
Feb. 9—Decadent Buffet (special rates, all sets): 50 Oysters Prime Rib, 3 Guests, 4 Dozen Iron Au Gratin Cream, Parmesan Crusted Corn, Yorkshire Pudding; My Way, Baked Potato Bar, Baked Tomato & Fresh Mozzarella Salad, Caribbean & Pancetta Salad, Soups, Tomatoes of Roasted Tomato & Cold Shot Glass Beet, Prawn Poached in Grand Marnier with Orange Crème Anglaise.
Feb. 11—The Best Steak Made from 50 Beef Shoulder—Hearthfully Made in Your Mouth: 5-Hour Baked Shoulder "Pot Roast Style," Beef Knee Beef Stew, Beef Shoulder and Mixed Mushroom Stew, Truffle Oil Drizzled Slow Roasted Beef Shoulder Strings, Baked Potato Bar, Baked Tomato & Fresh Mozzarella Salad, Caribbean & Pancetta Salad, Soups, Tomatoes of Roasted Tomato & Cold Shot Glass Beet, Prawn Poached in Grand Marnier with Orange Crème Anglaise.
Feb. 13—It's A Date!—Valentine Menu: Delicious Stuffed Dates, Salad of Mixed Greens in Phyllo Cups with Roasted Grapes and Four Grain, Cream of Shiitake & Portobello Soup, Sausage and Fruit-Stuffed Cream Roast Served with Cracks Rice, Grass, Mashed & Mixed Berry Sauce, Valentine Baked Alaska. Call 9288298, 837 9008 or 5828-480/0/3.

Culinary essentials
Maya Kitchen offers fundamental culinary courses. "Basic Culinary," Feb. 12-15, (p.m.-2 p.m., teaches kitchen fundamentals and covers unique hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; actual preparation of dishes, etc. All students get a free cookbook.
Creative expression is caught in "Basic Cake Design 1," Feb. 13-15, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Topics include Basic Icing Preparation (Boiled, Butter Cream & Chocolate), coloring techniques, etc. with free cake and decorating tips.
Baking principles will be covered in "Fundamentals of Bakery Production," Feb. 19-22, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Topics include the baking techniques, yeast breads, quick breads, etc. Theory of Practice for Commercial Scale Production is also included. Attendees get a free baking cookbook. The Maya Kitchen is on the BF, Liberty Bldg., 8, Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati. 8921125 or 5563511 loc 108; www.themayakitchen.com.

SALMON Kiwi-Balsamic Glaze

EVOLUTION Caesar Salad

GUAVA Cooler and Watermelon Shake

Haute cuisine amid high fashion

Chateau 1771 brings its innovative cooking to a chic new address

AFTER 11 YEARS IN Dilipan, Chateau 1771 has now brought its nouvelle cuisine to a new chic address in Makati City.

Chief operating officer and executive chef Ricky Rose Pacheco celebrates the momentous event with new creations like Beef Pancetta, Salado Lyonnaise, Polenta and Shiitake Salad, Cranberry Duck Breast, Sandiman with Chorizo Sausage and Grilled Ring Pizzetta.

Of course, the restaurant that got its name from the address of its original location, 1771 M. Adriatico, Malate, Manila, boasts better than to drop dishes that have acquired their own following.

So brother will still get the Potenza de Chateau (Greek Ravioli), Tomato Cheese Fondue, Lemon Chicken, Oven Pizza and Pasta Cherries, among others.

Located right next to the lush gardens of the Greenbelt complex, the new Chateau spells elegance outside and inside.

Glass walls allow plenty of natural light and create a cheery and warm ambience. Inside the dining area shaped like the letter L, the place walls also let diners enjoy the garden as they eat their meal in air-conditioned comfort.

The subtly elegant interiors showcase two large works by acclaimed artist Cesar Dubouzet and a few smaller art pieces.

Two private rooms can sit eight and six people. (When combined, they can hold as many as 30 persons).

Aside from offering breakfast, lunch and dinner, the new Chateau 1771 is versatile enough to offer whatever a customer, from a tired shopper to a high powered businessman, wants.

Customers can get a simple pick-me-up snack, refreshing drink or a meal that is meant to impress. They can also simply hunt-and-peck in the bakery and humour taste of homemade ice cream or be seduced by richly decadent desserts like Chocolate Ganache Tart.

As in its previous location, the new Chateau 1771 puts as high a premium on service as its cuisine offering. Partners and chief executive officer Ricky Rose Pacheco have brought together a team of old and new hands that will make sure customers do not only have pleasant memories of the food but also the service they get. *Linda B. Bulido*

Chateau 1771 Tel. 7209700 or 0917-9029407; is open Sunday Thursday, 7-12 a.m., breakfast, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., lunch; 6-10 p.m., dinner; and until 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday.

CHATEAU Ice Cream/Coffee

ELEGANT interiors of the new Chateau

LEMON Meringue Tarte

COFFEE Pie

GLASS walls allow diners to enjoy the lush Greenbelt garden.

OWN Dimalo paintings go wherever Chateau goes.

Remembering Larry Cruz

From page G1

said.

And there were restaurants overseas now also going—Manila to Washington, DC and Café Adriatico to Hong Kong.

There were too instances when we ate at restaurants abroad. They were restaurants in Singapore (I forgot the name) the Philippines was participating in a culinary competition.

Our lunch and dinner were devoted by Larry, who brought us to Bali Bali—Bistro Leaf Spoto for Indian food, Mamnoh Hadar for the Vietnamese dishes and an Indonesian restaurant with a name I cannot now recall.

Some ideas

He showed me his list of restaurants recommended by early bloggers on the Internet.

One could sense how the restaurateurs with us, like Larry, Gloria Fuentes and Myrna Segismundo, were already thinking of how to incorporate what they were seeing into their respective menus. They would look at each other and laugh because they knew what each had been thinking.

On that last lazy afternoon in Magsaysay, Larry asked about Kalinayan, the project to promote Filipino cuisine in the country and abroad.

He bristled at the thought that the project would "standardize" Filipino cooking. He did not think that should be done even though I explained that was simply a guide and was not meant to dictate what dishes should be served and how to cook them.

Larry reacted that way because he was one of those who had actually made Filipino food as par with the best anywhere of the world. He used to call it "Versailslying" but, looking at the food he commissioned served, he learned from other countries as well.

The impossible thing to, in his restaurants serving Filipino cooking, we will everything the food so Filipino no matter that the staple has wings. The flavors so we know them are also there.

The best compliment he gave me was to put my name on the menu of Abe. I imagine him having that mouth angry look that would turn into a supposed smile when I tell him that it must have been a mistake for something I promised me to do in my early days of food writing. He asked me then not to give him the title "Baron King."

E-mail the author at pinoyfood44@yahoo.com

THE CONSUMER

Just say no

By Linda B. Bulido

LUISA BRODIT OF Laguna wanted to buy a new slimming product shown on the Home Shopping network on television.

But when she called the company she was told she could only get the product if she also bought another item.

Though she explained to them that she did not need the other item, they were adamant that she could only purchase the product she wanted if she would get the whole bundle.

Brodit wanted to know from the Department of Trade and Industry if this practice was legal.

In response to her question, Mario Aric, supervising trade and industry development specialist of the Legal Affairs Center of DTI's National Capital Region, said:

"Please be informed that you are not compelled to buy a promo item which you feel or think you don't need."

Aric said it was entirely up to Brodit whether or not she would buy the package.

"As a consumer you have the right to choose... Think and specify what you really want, compare products with one another, read manuals, instructions, even the fine prints to determine which product will serve you best... exercise prices before buying a product," he said.

Aric added that consumers who felt persons behind materials aired on TV were misleading should file formal complaints with DTI so the agency could conduct an official investigation.

Tips for the green shopper

Peyton Mays, writing for MSN Shopping, said environment conscious shoppers could help make the world healthier and safer by keeping the environment in mind when shopping.

"It's often the simplest actions that have the greatest impact," he stressed.

Mays offers some suggestions for green shopping.

1. Buy in bulk. When you buy the largest quantity of a product you can use, you help reduce the waste in packaging.

Mays pointed out that about a third of America's trash was just packaging and about 10 cents of every dollar spent went into the packaging that got thrown away.

2. Buy recycled products.

Mays said single-use products like disposable razors and cameras, plastic cups and plates should be avoided. People enjoyed the conveniences of these items at the expense of the environment.

"All this stuff goes directly from the manufacturer to the landfill with only a brief stop at your home.

3. Buy products that last.

Use cloth towels and napkins instead of the paper variety whenever possible and when you must use paper, make sure it's made from 100 percent recycled resources," he said.

4. Use rechargeable batteries. They last longer, cost less to use and help keep toxins out of the waste stream.

Mays said conventional batteries contained cadmium and mercury and must be treated as hazardous waste.

5. Buy used or refurbished products. Used books save trees and refurbished electronics save money.

6. Buy *bien-être* shampoo heads. They can help cut waste bills by 50 percent and help conserve water.

7. Buy energy-efficient appliances.

They do not only help reduce carbon emissions, but also result in immediate savings on power bill.

8. Buy compact fluorescent bulbs to save energy and money. Fluorescent bulbs last 10 times longer than the incandescent variety. In the US, replacing three incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent means savings of $60 and 300 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.

9. Try organic and nontoxic alternatives to household chemicals and pesticides.

Mays said the Environmental Protection Agency found that the average American home reacts to five times more contaminated than the area just outside of it, "mostly due to the presence and residues of household cleaners and pesticides."

He pointed out that chemicals drained into sewers or seeped into the water table.

10. Buy lawn with a long life span or low upkeep.

Discarded tires, Mays said, polluted landfills, presented a fire hazard and wasted oil. Tires should be properly refitted to reduce waste and save gas.

Mays added that retreading saved about 400 million gallons of oil each year.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, PhilippineDailyInquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Alexandra and Tejeron Sts., Makati City, or e-mail tbulido@inquirer.com.ph

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aquino

The fifth basic taste

DID YOU KNOW THERE IS a fifth taste and it is called *umami*?" Alan German asked over lunch some weeks back.

I had heard of *umami*, and a bit about it but never quite knew what to make of it. I knew it was largely associated with the broth of bonito, dried skjaci fish, *umami* in tomatoes? Brain, and palate combined in a rather solid description of me on the subject.

To educate me, German sent a whole envelope of CDs and literature.

Flavor factors

What is *umami*?

According to the Umami Information Center: "The flavor of food is determined by a number of different factors including taste, smell, color, temperature and overall appearance, as well as by physiological or psychological conditions. Some of the most important factors are the basic tastes of sweet, sour, salty, bitter and *umami*."

Professor Kikunae Ikeda and there was a noble name in chefs' then was not *umami*, salty, bitter or spicy.

It has been close to a century since Ikeda, a Japanese scientist from the Tokyo Imperial University, through scientific research, first discovered that "glutamic acid, an amino acid, was responsible for the *umami* taste of kombu."

Ikeda first extracted glutamate from kombu and, through further research, developed a flavor-enhancing substance known in 1909 (monosodium glutamate or MSG). The term *umami* is coined from kombu.

Umami—described in the literature as "subtle, savory, meaty, brothy, mouthful, mouthwatering," is found naturally in many foods including "meat, fish, vegetables and dairy products."

Though it is said to be difficult to detect in some types of food, *umami* plays a major role in making food delicious.

In Japanese cookery, chefs' stock made of kombu, bonito flakes and dried shiitake mushrooms best represents the taste that is *umami*.

In Southeast Asia, shrimp paste, fish sauce and soy are rich in glutamate and, in the case of fish sauce which has many grades, those highest in glutamate are most expensive, I reckon due to by well-roundedness or business factors.

Umami has been present in Chinese cuisine for ages. Found in fermented food products and mother stocks made from cooked meat bones simmered for hours. The stocks are the base flavor so to speak in exquisite Chinese food.

Global principle

But does *umami* only come in tidy? Apparently not. From East to West the *umami* principle remains the same.

"BBQ in the East and Brazilian in the West", according to the booklet 'Umami the World." The recipes, though different, utilize ingredients rich in glutamate, thus the *umami* taste *umami*.

The booklet spoke of meats, cured meats, fish, cheeses, dairy and tomatoes, rich in glutamate.

The manner by which these ingredients are processed for culinary use may vary (fresh, aged, cured...) and it is largely due to the process the ingredient undergoes that *umami* or glutamate increases.

The more glutamate is released to "liberated" by the process of curing or fermentation, the more *umami* is detected. The more glutamate, the more flavorful.

The book further pointed out that it was not surprising that some of the most famous and flavorful dishes/sauces from the West was tomato based—salsa, ketchup, spaghetti, pizza, burgers.

Is it because of *umami* that we so love cheeseburgers, described as a "layered construction *umami*" made of beef, cheese and smothered with ketchup.

Is it the cheese, cured meats, tomatoes and anchovies that make our mouths water so early in our childhood?

As food for thought, I leave you with words from the final chapter of the book "Umami the World". "Some Western cooks and consumers have resisted the use of monosodium glutamate as a refined flavor enhancing additive, presenting it as somehow unnatural or even dangerous, yet these same people have no hesitation using concentrated bouillon cubes and powders to create soups and sauces, or to adding a good shot of Worcestershire sauce, ketchup or steak sauce to boost the flavor of their food..."

While I agree with those very valid points, my question remains: Why is it that food lovers with what we commonly know as MSG-rich makes me struggle, dizzy?

But, for instance, a bowl of rice (rich in glutamate) when cooked, we are taken to need but very *umami*, does not? Nor does a bowl of perfectly cooked pasta tossed in a thick, flavorful tomato sauce topped with tons of cheese.

I was told it was because of other factors like oil, the combination of ingredients, what have you.

Recent studies show that glutamate are by no means harmful to health. We have all ingested a substitute or rich in glutamate very before we could ask whether it was good or bad for us. The substitute is breast milk!

To *umami* or not *umami*? . . . That is my question the question!

Source: Umami Information Center, Umami the World, The 5th Basic Taste—Umami Conversations. E-mail Amelia_aquino@yahoo.com

E-mail the author at reggie@inquirer.com.ph

ENTERTAINMENT

Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment

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Real golden compass

TOKYO—THE MAGICAL COMPASS IN THE blockbuster *Sammy Mo: "The Golden Compass"* has taken real shape, with a Japanese jewelry-making a 30-million-yen ($280,000-dollar) version. Yumiko Akizuchi has unveiled the compass... identical to the one in the movie but made of 18-carat gold—to drum up interest in the Japan premiere of the film starring Nicole Kidman and James Bond actor Daniel Craig. /AFP

CHEER FACTOR

'Idol' state

ONLINE CRITICS are favorable (again!) "21, mistaken at home" can only underscore the success of Charice from prodigy and dread Pinoky—Pinoy idol—into on the verge of penetrating the US mainstream. The miracle driver cares only that he is bringing "laughter and joy" to the world. /Page D4

Cinemalaya '08 picks tackle new themes

By Marivel R. Cruz

STORIES ABOUT CALL CENTER AGENTS, a dying woman with a to-do list, two Mangyan children lured by illegal loggers, a piano concert in a forest, and an aborted love proper some of the competing films in this year's Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival.

Now on its fourth year, Cinemalaya is an all-digital film competition aimed at discovering new Filipino filmmakers.

A total of 10 finalists selected from 194 entries submitted will be competing in the full-length feature category. The festival is set July 11 to 20 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Pasay City.

"100," by Chris Martinez, is about a centenarian (8 women with literally a hundred)

CINEMALAYA D4

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1 27 DRESSES + TAX
2 THE EYE
3 BUCKET LIST
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5 THE MIST
6 MY BROTHER's WIFE
7 IN THE NAME of the KING CLOVERFIELD
8 Indefeline: ROXXANNE
9 ONE MISSED CALL ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
10 JOHN RAMBO NATIONAL TREASURE 2

ERMITA

1 THE MIST
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 MY BROTHER'S WIFE
4 SAW IV CLOVERFIELD
5 NATIONAL TREASURE 2 / ONE MISSED CALL
6 IN THE NAME of the KING
7 27 DRESSES
8 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
9 THE EYE

METRO EAST

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 THE MIST
4 BUCKET LIST
5 MY BROTHER's WIFE
6 CLOVERFIELD / JOHN RAMBO
7 27 DRESSES / ONE MISSED CALL
8 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2 IN THE NAME of the KING

NOVALICHES

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 BUCKET LIST
4 IN THE NAME of the KING
5 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
6 CLOVERFIELD / SAW IV

PIONEER

1 THE EYE
2 THE MIST
3 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
4 BUCKET LIST

STA. ROSA

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 CLOVERFIELD
4 SAW IV

LIPA

1 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
4 SAW IV

DASMARINAS

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
4 THE EYE

IMUS

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 SAW IV
4 ONE MISSED CALL

ANGELES

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 DRAGON WAR
4 SYDNEY WHITE

TARLAC

1 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 AMERICAN GANGSTER

STARMILLS

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 SYDNEY WHITE
4 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
5 JOHN RAMBO
6 DRAGON WAR

BACOLOD

1 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
4 DRAGON WAR
5 SWEENEY TODD / ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
6 MARTIAN CHILD

ILOILO

1 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
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4 ONE MISSED CALL
5 27 DRESSES
6 BUCKET LIST
7 CLOVERFIELD
GREENHILL 1
1 BUCKET LIST
2 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
GREENHILL 3
1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 BUCKET LIST
3 THE EYE
4 BANGKOK LIMITED
5 27 DRESSES
ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 THE EYE
2 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
3 THE MIST
4 BUCKET LIST
5 27 DRESSES
AYALA CENTER CEBU
1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 STAR
3 THE EYE
4 SIGNS
MARKET! MARKET!
1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 BUCKET LIST
4 THE MIST
5 CLOVERFIELD
TRINOMA
1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 THE EYE
3 27 DRESSES
4 BUCKET LIST
5 THE MIST
6 ONE MISSED CALL
7 CLOVERFIELD

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A DARGON SIEGE TALE

VIGGO Mortensen

ELLEN Page

GEORGE Clooney

Stones docu to open Berlin Film Festival

BERLIN—THE ANNUAL BERLIN FILM Festival opens today with "Shine a Light," Martin Scorsese's documentary about the Rolling Stones.

The movie launches 11 days of movie-topped red carpet galas.

Among those movies are:

"Elegy" Ben Kingsley plays a critic whose life is turned upside down by a student, played by Penelope Cruz.

"Fifty and Windows," Madonna's documentary debut, starring Richard E. Grant and Eugene Hütz.

"Partition in the Garden," Julie Robert's debut.

"Paris Inside Dream of Life." A portrait of the singer Pool.

"Shine a Light," Scorsese's docu, which includes material from two Rolling Stones concerts in New York in 2006.

"The Other Boleyn Girl," starring Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson.

"There Will Be Blood." Actor Daniel Day-Lewis's up for an Oscar in his role as a greedy oil entrepreneur. Reuters

Nominees optimistic about Oscar program

BEVERLY HILLS...OPTIMISM REIGNED among Academy Awards nominees—both on their films' prospects and the chances that Hollywood's crippling writers strike will end in time for the Oscar show to go on as planned.

"I'm a positive individual. I think the case will come up tomorrow," said Viggo Mortensen, a Best Actor nominee for "Eastern Promises," who was among about 120 nominees attending the annual Oscar luncheon on Monday.

The date of the Oscars on Feb. 24 remains uncertain but looks brighter as the Writers Guild of America makes progress on a new contract with producers that would end the union's three-month old strike.

"But would (show the Oscars to avoid the fate that has been looming since the Golden Globes, where pleas to boycott were scrapped after union made it clear they would stay away in honor of striking picket lines).

George Clooney, nominated as Best Actor for the legal drama "Michael Clayton," repeated his view that he would not attend the Oscars if it meant crossing picket lines. But he said the deal to do the works has a good shot at success.

The lunch menu included salad with goat cheese and walnuts, a main course of salmon filet and chocolate mousse for dessert.

In the talk took a backseat to backslapping at the luncheon, where nominees come together to congratulate one another, celebrate the year's film achievements and poke some fun.

Indeed about her outfit, a black-and-white striped dress, Best Actress nominee Ellen Page of the teen pregnancy comedy "Juno" wisecracked, "I took my old prison uniform and... made it into a dress."

Page, a first time nominee, said the Oscar experience has been surreal. "It feels like, are you sure? Do you want to double-check that?" AP

Possible record deal for Renaldo

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos courtesy of Star World

SIMON COWELL MAY BE RIGHT, AFTER ALL.

The "American Idol" judge jokingly predicted that "Pacific Brothers Journey," composed and sung in early audition by Philippine-born aspirant Renaldo Lapuz would become a hit record.

On Monday, Sucess learned that a major label wants to sign Renaldo to a year-spanning contract. The 46-year-old Filipino-American for "a possible recording deal."

Lapuz's web site now features a hyperlink to an e-mail address for booking inquiries. There's also a contact on the best-seller section of "Silver Brothers Journey" on the site is a featured text with PA ad on Star World.

The home page's UK-based web master Dave Dunwoodge says that the United family, owner of Palms Hotel in Las Vegas and the NBA team Sacramento Kings, has invited Lapuz to be "their special guest this Basketball season." Dun, a local promoter is keen on meeting Lapuz in Europe.

All these jobs offers are a windfall for Lapuz, a former janitor and tricycle driver.

In a phone interview arranged by Star World (which also AI to Asia), Lapuz told Dunwoodge that, pre-Idol, his luck in the employment arena was zero.

"I worked three months in a warehouse, seven months for Greyhound Bus. The job I held the longest was as a night crew member at Walmart."

Now he's "under contract with AI management," Renaldo said, "so I can't plan anything." It didn't sound like a quip at all.

According to www.musicdispos.com, the AI contract is binding until the end of season 7 in May.

Lapuz seems to have a firm grasp of his popularity through. He admits that his new-found fame was unexpected. "I was shocked that, in two days 2.5 million people had watched the video (of my audition) on YouTube. I'd like to thank Jeremyscott, who accepted my song, who accepted me."

Recorded songs

He said he had other songs. "In 1998, I recorded and copyrighted 18 songs in the Philippines. I've translated two of them into English." He recounted recording in Joe's Tune, a studio on Ti Lana Road near Mabolo Village, his route as a tricycle driver.

The flip side of global fame, of course, is intrigue. Online critics note that: 1) Lapuz's audition and subsequent notoriety on "Ito nang Pilipinas Ilang?" consisted of various 2) the AI judges had been patronizing, 3) he "15 minutes of fame" would undermine the career of Charice Pempengco and Jerald Pineda... Pinoy talents on the verge of perennial in the Ultimate scene.

Never mind the last reputedly. Lapuz accepted his entire family: "Boys were laughing and joy. Where I finished, Simon told me to repeat, so I continued singing. As I was laughing to myself, everyone was allowed, spreading the laughter."

For good or ill, Lapuz represents the Great American Dream and all its implications. Some sanguine to assume. Quite tellingly, he hurried to sing, at age 5, "The Star Spangled Banner."

He continued, not without a hint of pride: "My father, though, he's Filipino, taught me the (Filipino) anthem."

Email bayansandiego@hotmail.com

Cinemalaya picks tackle new themes

From page D1

things to do before the dies.

"CLOSURE," by Emmanuel dela Cruz, is the story of Raquel Singh, or Tessa Prieto-dela," an Indian migrant.

"Concerto," by Paul Alexander Morales, is based on the two stories of the director's family. Morales relates how, toward the end of World War II, a piano concert is held in a Dasse hotel.

"Kaligayang Bawag," by Erlich Asuncion, is about a woman's brief encounter with four octogenarians who escaped from a nursing home.

"Baby Angelo," by Joel Ruiz and Ali Jaquin, is about a 10-year-old who lives in the dump site of a run-down apartment complex.

"Stolen," by Tara Illenberger, is the story of two Mangyan children lured by illegal loggers to smuggle wood from the mountains of Mindoro to the lowlands.

"My Fake American Accent," by Gerardo Salera, is a comedy about the life of disappointed, unfinished Bahad coal contract agent trained to take American accents.

"Sticky Pandin," by Paul Sta. Ana, follows the creative process of Baby, a prolific writer, abandoned wife and protective mother. As she writes about Mario, a taxi driver, the line between reality and fiction is blurred.

"Joy" is the name of the two protagonists...one living, the other dead...in this film by Francis Xavier K. Pasion. The living Joy is producing a documentary about the dead Joy, a gay teacher who was brutally killed.

"Stanchers," by Michael Christian Cardoz, is about convicts who prepare the meals everyday in prison.

The Similar Filmmakers will receive a P500,000 seed fund from festival sponsor Fernando Instrumentos Inc. The winning entry, which will be announced on July 28, gets an additional grant of P200,000 and the Cinemalaya Trophy.

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BY FRANCIS DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

2		5	4					3
	9						1	
			5	1				6
						4		2
		7				8		
6		8						
8				6	3			
	7						8	
9					4	7		5

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	7	5	3	8	9	2	1	4
1	8	4	2	7	5	6	3	9
9	2	3	6	1	4	8	5	7
3	6	7	4	5	2	3	9	1
2	5	9	1	8	3	4	7	8
3	4	1	7	6	8	9	2	5
4	1	2	8	3	7	5	9	6
5	8	6	9	2	1	7	4	3
7	3	9	5	4	6	1	8	2

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Hitmaker Ne-Yo at the Big Dome

SHOW TIME

POPSTAR STAR NE-YO PERFORMS on Feb. 29 at the Araneta Coliseum.

Born of African-American and Chinese heritage, the 28-year-old singer-songwriter released his debut album, "In My Own Words" (Def Jam Recordings), in 2006. It went straight to No. 1 in the Billboard 200 chart.

Ne-Yo is known for having co-written Beyoncé's "Irreplaceable" and has collaborated with the likes of Rihanna, Celine Dion, Britney Spears and Enrique Iglesias, among others. He's also writing songs for Craig David and Usher, and has been contacted by producer will.i.am to work on Michael Jackson's new album.

Call 911-5555 for tickets.

Julia Fordham at Ayala Malls

Ayala Malls presents British singer-songwriter Julia Fordham in a series of shows starting tomorrow, 6:30 p.m. at the Alabang Town Center, Feb. 8, 7 p.m. at Trinoma, Quezon City, Feb. 10, 7 p.m. at Glorietta, Makati, and Feb. 13, 6:30 p.m. at Ayala Center Cebu's Cinema One.

Fordham began her music career in 1988 and has just released her 10th album, "China Blue," which is available online via WorldTunes.

Call 843-2783 and 772-1860 (Alabang Town Center), 995-5880 (Trinoma), 750-7373 (Glorietta), and (032) 231-5342 loc. 324 (Ayala Center Cebu).

Erik Santos at St. Joseph's School Pandacan

Erik Santos, Mariel Rodriguez and Boy Abunda will provide the entertainment at the grand alumni homecoming of St. Joseph's School, Pandacan, Manila on Feb. 9.

Call the S.H. Alumni Office at 562-3115 or 495-4026.

UP Manila Chorale's 'Pasasalamat'

The UP Manila Chorale sings in "Pasasalamat," a fundraising concert for PGH Ward 2 patients, on Mar. 1 at the Jaime Cardinal Sin auditorium of Sacred Heart School.

The group recently won the Youth Choir Category in the First International Arnoldo Breakiano Choir Competition and Festival in Asturias. Also performing is pop singer Kyla.

Tonight

Wally Gonzalez, Ace Aguando, Juan Luna and surprise guests at Club 21, Solaire Mall; Bilip De la Rosa on Adelaimida St., Makati

Johnny and Inday at The Shore. Call 634-5587

Nina Dia at Malibu Bar Shore

Tomorrow

Angelo, Chorus, The Dorgans, Ikhyscotia, The Low-Fiche and Sing at mGeiko

The Juris at 70s Bistro

Sonetto Investor and Carla Gruez, 8 p.m., at Eastwood City Central Plaza

Feb. 9

Abalelim, 8 p.m., at Eastwood City Central Plaza

Feb. 13

Bob Aurillo, 10 p.m. at Penguin Cafe

Feb. 15

Bob Aurillo, 7-9 p.m. at Mag-Net Kalipunan, Quezon City

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